

# *Elementary English*

LAURA INGALLS WILDER  
A GIFTED PUPIL  
PHONICS AGAIN  
LANGUAGE ARTS RESEARCH, 1956



ORGAN OF THE

NATIONAL

COUNCIL

OF

TEACHERS

OF

ENGLISH



*From The Little House in The Big Woods*

APRIL,  
1957

# Elementary ENGLISH

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### *By Way of Introduction . . .*

In February, 1952, Evelyn Wenzel wrote for *Elementary English* an article entitled, "'Little House' Books of Laura Ingalls Wilder." With the recent death of Mrs. Wilder at age ninety, another re-appraisal of this much-loved writer becomes timely. FRANCES FLANAGAN, a third grade teacher in St. Joseph, Missouri and a master of arts graduate from the State University of Iowa, writes the charming tribute that leads our issue this month.

Interest in the education of the gifted child continues to grow. One of the pioneers in this field, Professor PAUL WITTY, and ROCHELLE BLUMENTHAL present a detailed profile of one such richly endowed boy.

CARRIE STEGALL is a frequent and welcome visitor to these pages. Those who know her and her infectious enthusiasm see it shine through the lines of her article, "Dear Mr. Chairman."

Children's writing should have an audience. Sometimes, although by no means always, that audience may be the teacher herself. INEZ MARIE WARE tells how a simple, spontaneous note from a child to the teacher started a correspondence that involved the whole class in purposeful writing.

Dr. and Mrs. LESTER WHEELER have published numerous helpful articles on remedial reading in *Elementary English*. The discussion of the Reading Inventory by Dr. Wheeler and EDWIN H. SMITH in this issue will interest all those who work with retarded readers.

No one writes with more clarity, or with a more vivid sense of the practical realities in the field of elementary school reading instruction, than Professor E. W. DOLCH. In this issue he tackles the thorny problem of phonics. He

has done so before, but readers will be grateful for the straightforward manner in which he deals with the issue here.

The article by RUTH G. STRICKLAND was first read before a section meeting of the National Council of Teachers of English at St. Louis in November, 1956. It is here presented at the request of many listeners who enjoyed it. Reading it will require thought, but thinking is no new experience for readers of *Elementary English*.

Dr. DAVID H. RUSSELL and the editor of this magazine visited England and Scotland in the fall of 1956. Neither knew of the presence of the other in these fabulous islands. We met, all too briefly, at the St. Louis Council convention, and compared notes on our visits to schools. In addition to our pleasure in meeting and talking with English educators, we found great satisfaction in discovering common purposes and in learning about instructional practices in Britain. Dr. Russell's review of *Progress in Reading* is enriched by the background of his visits to schools in the United Kingdom.

MARIAN A. ANDERSON and RALPH C. STAIGER, in behalf of the National Conference on Research in English, have rendered a difficult and valuable service in compiling the list of language arts research topics for 1956. If the compilation elicits sufficient interest, the authors promise to repeat the study next year.

We are glad once more to present the conference program of the International Reading Association. This sister organization is probably the newest and most rapidly growing educational organization in America. Many members of the National Council will no doubt wish to attend the sessions.



# ELEMENTARY ENGLISH

XXXIV

APRIL, 1957

No. 4

FRANCES FLANAGAN

## A Tribute to Laura Ingalls Wilder

On the morning of February 11 Wayne, a seventh-grade boy, solemnly entered my third-grade classroom. In his hand he carried a newspaper that obviously had something to do with the visit. After our greetings Wayne said, "Have you seen the morning paper?" I answered that I had not. Wayne began opening the paper. "There's a piece in here about Laura," he said. "She's dead."

Yes, it is true. Laura Ingalls Wilder is dead. After ninety full and amazing years the vitality that was Laura gave out. But we who have known and loved her through her books cannot repress the urge to make the very trite remark that it is not really true: that Laura will be on earth forever—she and Pa and Ma and Mary and all their "Little Houses."

Perhaps it is too soon to be trying to assess Mrs. Wilder's contribution to children or to establish her place in literature. Already, however, her books have been cherished by two generations of readers.

They have been given a completely different format; the books have been translated into three languages. These things, of course, are not conclusive evidence of greatness. We who read the "Little House" books to our classes, however, know that



*Laura Ingalls Wilder*

the books have a certain magic: year after year we see it in the faces of our children as we read; we hear it in their conversation as they play. What is this magic? Is it the story, the characters, the art of story-telling? As one reads and watches and listens, he

comes to the realization that the Ingalls family often proves to be one of the greatest loves of a child's life. Such a great bond of sympathy and understanding could have been engendered only by a felicitous combination of many elements—the story, the characters, and the art of the narrator must all be at their best. It is without doubt a great story, greatly told.

Miss Flanagan is a teacher in the schools of St. Joseph, Missouri.



*From Little House on the Prairie*

The material for Laura's books was her own life. If one were to search for years one could scarcely hope to duplicate the wealth of background material furnished "free" to Laura. Laura Ingalls was the daughter of pioneers. With her parents she moved from the woods of Wisconsin to the prairie of Indian Territory (Oklahoma), and from there to the northern plains. With each move a new home had to be made out of a different kind of wilderness. Laura loved the rugged settings

she found around her; she was keenly observant, and she remembered everything she saw.

So, from Laura's well-filled past came stories of prairie fires and of Indian war cries, of grasshopper plagues and devastating blizzards. Laura had narrowly escaped drowning when a flash flood had hit the family covered wagon in mid-stream. She had seen wolf packs baying at the moon as they encircled her home. Laura had helped her father build a door

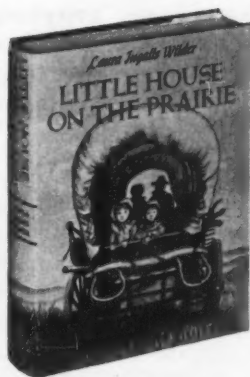
to keep those wolves out of the house; she had twisted hay to burn so that the family would not freeze. There had been joys, too, on the frontier. Mrs. Wilder could remember the blissful peace of sitting beneath the stars after a campfire meal, the fun of visiting a deserted Indian camp, and the incomparable delight of having a penny of one's own.

Along with having this abundance of subject matter, Mrs. Wilder had an advantage not given to every writer. Although she was born in 1867 she did not write her eight books until the thirties and forties. By that time pioneer life in America was largely a thing of the past. New inventions, technological developments and the onrush of settlers into the West had made the old way of life obsolete.



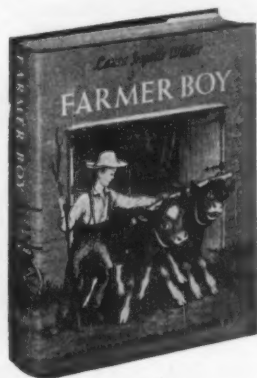
From *The Little House in the Big Woods*

Many adults knew the sod house, the covered wagon and the slate only as objects connected with the past. No longer was it an ordinary experience to live in a home which one's family raised almost single-handed from an empty prairie. From her vantage point in a new era Mrs. Wilder was able to select those experiences which were real to her but which could



only be past history to her readers. This genuine participation in the past of which she wrote gives Mrs. Wilder's books an immediacy that only the most gifted historical writer could hope to achieve.

But even if Mrs. Wilder had never seen a prairie nor heard a wolf howl she would have had a story. The heart of her books is Pa. Charles Ingalls was always busy providing a meager but sufficient living. He was unswervingly honest and just, always loving. Pa's fiddle sang in the little house in the woods, by the side of the covered wagon, in the dugout in Minnesota, and in the Dakotas. When he was gone, "everything was flat and dull."



When he was home, "everything was all right."<sup>2</sup> Laura idolized her father, and we are told that Laura's deepest joy in her success as an author was the realization that Pa would not be forgotten.<sup>3</sup>

Only second to Pa came Ma. Ma made a home even when the hearth was a campfire. Her home and her family: Charles, her husband; Mary, (who became blind), Laura, Carrie, and Grace came first in every action and word. Ma's strength of character was the cornerstone of the Ingalls' household. Around Ma, one just had to be good.

Together, Pa and Ma produced a remarkable home-life. As long as Ma was there with her smile and as long as Pa was there with his gun, nothing could really go wrong. Irene Smith has pointed out that the Ingalls' family life was outstanding for

its courage, its security, and its incorruptible decency.<sup>4</sup> This abundance of good spills over, reaching the life of every child who becomes familiar with the "Laura and Mary" books. May Hill Arbuthnot has said that

"... from the famous cycle of the stories of the often endangered Ingalls family ... children draw a continual sense of warmth and well-being."<sup>5</sup>

We adults like the Wilder books because they add to the child's feeling of security; and so does the child, though he has not analyzed his feelings, or much less given them names. He finds, however, that his unspoken demands are granted. He would be courageous: the Ingalls family is courageous. He desires a happy home: the Ingalls home is happy, and under physical circumstances no more propitious



From *Little House on the Prairie*

than his own. He needs love and security: he shares in the Ingalls wealth. Without his knowing it, the child is furnished a sort of catharsis through his reading of Mrs. Wilder's books. By sympathetically reliving the ordeals of the Ingalls family he acquires a new respect for himself, a new strength, and (too often) an improved set of values with which to face life.

Material alone, however, does not make a book (Mrs. Wilder learned this herself when her first attempt was rejected).<sup>6</sup> It is only through the application of art that any story becomes interesting to others. Mrs. Wilder's success was not accidental; she was in full command of the skills of writing, and—almost equally important—she had known Pa.

Along with his other virtues Pa had a remarkable gift for story-telling. Whenever he told a story he embellished it with details and slowly climbed toward a thrilling climax. There was the time, for instance, when he had walked to town without a gun. It was dark when he started home and he was on the lookout for bears.



From *The Long Winter*



From *The Little House in the Big Woods*

He had watched and looked all the way, and then, right in front of him in the path he had to take, stood a big, black bear. Pa relates:

He was standing up on his hind legs, looking at me. I could see his eyes shine. I could see his pig-snout. I could even see one of his claws in the starlight.

My scalp prickled, and my hair stood straight up. I stopped in my tracks, and stood still. The bear did not move. There he stood, looking at me.

I knew it would do no good to try to go around him. He would follow me into the dark woods where he could see better than I could. I did not want to fight a winter-starved bear in the dark.

Oh, how I wished for my gun!

Pa stretched his story on and on. He told how he shouted, but the bear did not move, and how he thought he would have to get on home anyway. Finally, he got a club nearby, and as he recounted:

I lifted it up in my hands, and I ran straight at that bear. I swung my club as hard as I could and I brought it down, bang! on his head.

And there he still stood, for he was nothing but a big, black, burned stump!<sup>7</sup>





From *Little House on the Prairie*

This and other of Pa's stories provide interludes of intense excitement. For younger children, with quickly waning interests, they brighten a winter that otherwise might grow too long. For adults, they provide a clue to Mrs. Wilder's ability: she had sat under a master craftsman.

Upon the fine foundation laid by Pa Laura built a style that is both distinctive and polished. One of the highpoints of Mrs. Wilder's style is its delicate balance. The interpolation of Pa's stories into more prosaic narrative was but one of the author's means for accomplishing this end. Another was the careful blending of descriptions of pioneer activities with story-type material. Accounts of cheese making, of harvesting grain, and of storing ice were so placed that more exciting episodes might serve as a foil for the largely informative material. Pa goes hunting: we learn how to care for the meat; wolves surround the house at night: we are told how

a pioneer could make a door, complete with latch, and without a single nail.

Often the descriptive passages have been broken by bits of conversation. Always, they are made as vital to the story as, in reality, they were to all the Laura's and Mary's of a hundred years ago. Mrs. Wilder deliberately and consciously planned to share her wealth with children,



just as does any teacher; but so skillfully did she handle her material that the child has only pleasure in being taught.

Dozens of examples of Mrs. Wilder's



skill with didactic material come to mind; this one, from the *Little House on the Prairie*, explains the laying of a puncheon floor:

One day, the last log was split, and next morning Pa began to lay the floor. He dragged the logs into the house and laid them one by one, flat side up. With his spade he scraped the ground underneath, and fitted the round side of the log firmly down into it. With his ax he trimmed away the edge of the bark and cut the wood straight, so that each log fitted against the next, with hardly a crack between them.

Then he took the head of the ax in his hand, and with little, careful blows he smoothed the wood. He squinted along the log to see that the surface was straight and true. He took off last little bits, here and there. Finally he ran his hand over the smoothness, and nodded.

"Not a splinter!" he said. "That'll be all right for little bare feet to run over."

He left that log fitted into its place, and dragged in another.

When he came to the fireplace, he used shorter logs. He left a space of bare earth for a hearth, so that when sparks or coals popped out of the fire they would not burn the floor.

One day the floor was done. It was smooth and firm and hard, a good floor of solid oak that would last, Pa said, forever.

"You can't beat a good puncheon floor," he said, and Ma said she was glad to be up off the dirt. She put the little china woman on the mantel-shelf, and spread a red-checked cloth on the table."

Another balance is to be found in the characters themselves. The ever restrained Ma is a foil for the occasionally exuberant Pa; the sometimes naughty brunette Laura is a balance for the obedient blond Mary. Laura's naughtiness may indeed be one of the great attractions of the books. It is very

satisfying to young readers to see that even good children do not always act that way, and it is a great relief to find out that mothers and fathers love their children even though their behavior may not always be perfect. Mrs. Wilder's ability to preserve Laura as a real little girl with whom not only girls, but boys as well, feel a bond of sympathy is one of the strong points of the series. And there is no hint of preaching: Mrs. Wilder was able to present both the virtues and the misdeeds of children without attempting to make them excuses for discourses on morals.

The Ingalls family moved from Northern woods to Southwestern prairie, and again to the North to several different settings. These many moves provide Laura with scenery of sufficient scope for the long story she had to tell. A less knowing author might have feared that the young reader would be bored by the inclusion of the many descriptions of the out of doors. To one, however, who has chased after gophers, who has lived beside a creek, and who has seen stars dangling from her ceiling nature must appear in its true colors as a vital part of life. In *On the Banks of Plum Creek* Mrs. Wilder wrote:



From *Farmer Boy*



From *The Little House in the Big Woods*

All around the door the morning glory flowers were fresh and new, springing with all their might out of the green leaves. All along Plum Creek the birds were talking. Sometimes a bird sang, but mostly they talked. Tweet, tweet, oh twitter twee twit! one said. Then another said, Chee, Chee, Chee, and another laughed, Ha ha ha, tiraloo!"

When you have lived so close to Nature it must necessarily be seen in its proper perspective. There are not always blizzards, but neither does the sun always shine. The outdoors can befriend you, but it also can be strong and terrible. Nonetheless, you will almost inevitably love the wild animals about you; your toes will itch for the feel of the water in the brook; and your eyes will glow at the sight of tall trees or limitless horizon. Laura's affection for the out-of-doors and her awareness of it are found on nearly every page. Birds and

flowers and the bright sun may creep into any recounting: for Laura, they were never far away.

Children cannot fail to love an outdoors that is presented as if it were alive; and they grow in stature as they share the experiences of a little girl who loved wolves better than oxen. It is another mark of Mrs. Wilder's style that her presentation of nature is sympathetic, unsentimental, and in concepts which a child accepts.

One book in the series does not center upon the Ingalls family. This is *Farmer Boy*. *Farmer Boy* is the story of the childhood of Almanzo Wilder, Laura's husband, who also figures in *These Happy Golden Years*. Mrs. Arbuthnot has pointed out the value of including this book in the series. Almanzo was a wealthy farm boy. His parents were well-established members of their northern New York community. The child who reads about the youth of both Laura and Almanzo discovers that neither wealth nor poverty is an essential ingredient of happiness; and also that it is not safe to generalize that Laura and Mary were poor because they lived "a long time ago."<sup>10</sup>

Mrs. Wilder's books appeal to children because of their depth of reality. This quality stems, in part, from the autobiographical nature of the books, but is the result also of the author's ability to refrain from sentimentality. Mrs. Wilder's stories are real because they are told with dramatic truth and insight, restraint, and respect.

Not the least of Mrs. Wilder's assets was her ability to maintain a superior prose style. Evelyn Wenzel wrote of the "Little House" books that "the child who reads these books or has the earlier books read to him cannot fail to get the feel of good

writing."<sup>11</sup> Even a brief examination of Mrs. Wilder's books would reveal several factors leading to the success and beauty of their prose.

First of all, the child is never repulsed by any hint that the writer is "talking down." From *The Little House in the Big Woods* written for eight or nine years olds, to *These Happy Golden Years* written for adolescents Mrs. Wilder has used a style that has combined quality of writing with appropriate modes of expression. Irene Smith speaks of her graduation in style as a distinguishing feature of her books. "They (the books) have kept pace," she writes, "with the growing reader, right up to the teen-aged girls whose present reading of *These Happy Golden Years* is delightful in its intimacy because they and



Laura were small together."<sup>12</sup> In this span of childhood Mrs. Wilder has been able to take the poetry of youthful thought and present it so skillfully that the child knows it is his own, and the adult recognizes it as something that once belonged to him.

Another mark of Mrs. Wilder's style is her fine use of the vernacular. Her conversation is real conversation: terse, as no doubt it was—her biographer gives terse-



From *The Little House in the Big Woods*



From *These Happy Golden Years*.

ness as a trait of her character—but child-like when children are talking.<sup>13</sup> Much of the characterization of Ma and Pa is developed through conversation. Ma's conversation is a little prim; Pa's occasionally unrestrained. And although Laura often thought about how much Pa's presence meant to her, it was usually Ma who put such mature sentiments into words.

One also notices a characteristic economy in sentence structure. Mrs. Wilder's words came adequately but seldom overabundantly. Her paragraphs are short and structurally simple. Lack of length, however, does not create a lack of beauty. Just as the young Laura's ears had been pleased by the tune of Pa's fiddle or the song of the dickcissel, so the mature Laura listened with care to the turn of each phrase. The result is simple but beautiful prose.

Mrs. Wilder's literary pattern is so consistent that the reading of any portion one might chance upon would serve to demonstrate her style. These paragraphs are from *The Little House in the Big Woods*:

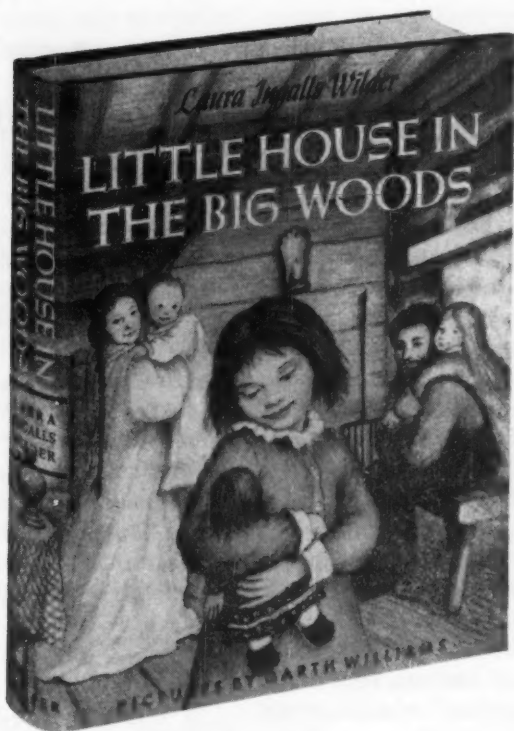
They were happy as they drove through the springtime woods. Carrie laughed and bounced, Ma was smiling, and Pa whistled while he drove the horses. The sun was bright and warm on the road. Sweet, cool, smells came out of the leafy woods.

Rabbits stood up in the road ahead, their little front paws dangling down and their noses sniffing, and the sun shone through their tall, twitching ears. Then they bounded away, with a flash of little white tail. Twice Laura and Mary saw deer looking at them with their large, dark eyes, from the shadows among the trees.<sup>14</sup>

They are all there: the simplicity, the economy, the sense of immediacy, the awareness of beauty and goodness, the attentiveness to beautiful sounds. But probably the basic element of Mrs. Wilder's style was her ability to sustain the point of view of the child she had been nearly seventy years before. It is never the mature Laura who is afraid of the raging fire or who worries about Pa: it is Laura, the little girl.



From *The Little House in the Big Woods*



This consistency of point of view maintained throughout the series is an accomplishment. Possibly it is a reflection of Laura's love for Pa: at Pa's feet Laura was forever young. And in her recapturing of the spirit of her childhood Mrs. Wilder has left a work of art which should take its place with the best writing our country has produced.

<sup>1</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, p. 153.

<sup>2</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *Little House on the Prairie*, p. 224.

<sup>3</sup>Smith, Irene, "Laura Ingalls Wilder and the 'Little House' Books," *HornBook*, September 1943, p. 304.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 302-303.

<sup>5</sup>Arbuthnot, May Hill, *Children and Books*, p. 3.

<sup>6</sup>Smith, Irene, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>7</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *The Little House in the Big Woods*.

<sup>8</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *Little House on the Prairie*, pp. 108-109.

<sup>9</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *On the Banks of Plum Creek*, p. 13.

<sup>10</sup>Mrs. Arbuthnot gave me this idea in a conversation several years ago.

<sup>11</sup>Wenzel, Evelyn, "Little House Books by Laura Ingalls Wilder," *Elementary English*, February 1952, pp. 65-74.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, Irene, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 293-306.

<sup>14</sup>Wilder, Laura Ingalls, *The Little House in the Big Woods*, pp. 117-118.

References made to the Wilder books are based on paging of the earlier edition except in the case of *Little House on the Prairie* where the 1953 edition was used.



PAUL WITTY  
AND  
ROCHELLE BLUMENTHAL

## The Language Development of an Exceptionally Gifted Pupil

Several studies of children of extreme precocity in language development have been reported in the literature of psychology; for example, Karl Witte, son of a pastor in Germany born in the early part of the nineteenth century. By the time he was seven years of age he was able to read five languages. His father taught him Latin, Greek, English and Italian as well as his native German. At the age of eight he derived much pleasure from reading such authors as Homer, Plutarch, Schiller, Cicero, Ossian, and Virgil. Another such case was Christian Heinrich Heineken, the son of an artist. He was born in 1721 and died four years and four months later. When "little Heineken" was fourteen months old he was able to repeat all the stories in the New Testament. Another example of remarkable language development is found in Otto Pohler, born in 1892. At one year 9 months of age, he could read dates on the calendar. And when he was four years old, he read and enjoyed books in the fields of history, biography and geography.

Since the advent of the intelligence test, such children have been more frequently cited. For example, Leta Stetter Hollingworth<sup>1</sup> described twelve children of I.Q.'s above 180. These children were exceptional in language development. One of the writers, too, has presented case studies of several such children.<sup>2</sup>

A recent article reported the development and attainment of twin boys who had repeatedly demonstrated extraordinarily high I.Q.'s. These boys learned to read at the age of three, and have exhibited consistently superior language development. By the time they entered school they had already read a number of books. Throughout their tests, their language ability was characterized by accuracy and originality.<sup>3</sup> Few children studied in our Psycho-Educational Clinic have seemed quite so exceptional as the child who will be described in this article.

### Referral

J was referred to the Psycho-Educational Clinic by his father who wished to obtain suggestions for guiding his remarkable son. Accordingly, diagnostic testing was arranged to determine the extent of J's intellectual superiority and to explore the resources that might

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<sup>1</sup>Leta L. Hollingworth, *Children Above 180 I.Q.*, New York: World Book Co., 1942.

<sup>2</sup>Paul Witty and Martin D. Jenkins. "The Educational Achievement of a Group of Gifted Negro Children," *Journal of Education Psychology*, Vol. 25 (November 1934), pp. 585-97.

<sup>3</sup>Paul Witty and Anne Coomer. "A Case Study of Gifted Twin Boys," *Exceptional Children*, Vol. 22 (December 1955), pp. 104-108; 124-125.



be drawn upon to enable him to develop his abilities to the maximum.

### Family Background

J is the son of a rabbi; he has a two-year old sister. The family background, although superior, contained few persons whose attainment would suggest childhood superiority approaching this child's status. However, J's parents are well-educated and intelligent people. They both received college degrees. The mother, Mrs. G. taught deaf children in a University school for four years after she had completed her college work. The father is a graduate of a theological college. J's two-year old sister, although considered very bright by her parents, does not demonstrate the unusual abilities that J did at her age. J appears to be an anomaly or variant such as is found sometimes, although rarely, in superior families.

### Physical Status

J is a well-built, healthy appearing four year old boy. His parents report that his general health is good. He has had only minor physical diseases from which he has recovered fully. His sleep habits are described as satisfactory. A report by a physician shows J to be in good health.

### Intelligence Test Results

The Terman-Merrill Revision of the Stanford-Binet Scale, Form L, was administered October 19, 1955. At this time J was four years and ten months old. He received a mental age of eight years and ten months on the test, thus earning an intelligence quotient of 183. His basal year was VI, and he gave correct responses to items in the XIV year level tests.

J was extremely active throughout the

testing; he questioned the items which the examiner recorded, and displayed more than an average amount of restlessness. But he entered willingly into a task and displayed strong interest when it was challenging. Although he appeared self-confident, he was eager to avoid failure of any kind. He said "I won't tell you" in answer to some of the more difficult questions, rather than risk giving an incorrect answer. However, it was not difficult for the examiner to maintain his attention during the giving of the higher level tests.

J's highest attainment was on verbal subtests of the Stanford-Binet Test, such as Vocabulary, Memory for Sentences, and Reading and Report. His poorest attainment was in those subtests requiring the explanation of pictures, and dealing with Verbal Absurdities. The results of this test indicate that J unquestionably possesses superior intelligence. His performance was consistently excellent throughout the test. He displayed originality in many of his responses, speed in reaction, and accuracy in recall.

### Educational Test Results

On the California Achievement Tests—Primary Form AA, J received a total grade-equivalent of 4.8. While this score is remarkable, it might have been even higher if his interest had been sustained throughout all tests. For example, in the test of multiplication, J solved the first eleven problems, but would not continue to try to solve the remaining items. It appears that J's educational attainment is commensurate with the high level of his capacity as suggested by the intelligence tests. The educational test results are shown in Table 1.

Table I—J'S EDUCATIONAL  
ATTAINMENT OF THE CALIFORNIA  
ACHIEVEMENT TEST-PRIMARY  
FORM AA.

<i>Test items</i>	<i>Grade Equivalents</i>
1. Reading Vocabulary	4.8
2. Reading Comprehension	5.6
Total Reading	5.2
3. Arithmetic Reasoning	5.3
4. Arithmetic Fundamentals	4.3
Total Arithmetic	4.8
5. Mechanics of English	3.2
6. Spelling	5.3
Total Language	4.5
TOTAL	4.8

Noteworthy is the fact that J's educational superiority is general. Although his attainment was highest in reading, he was also proficient in arithmetic and in spelling. J's poorest performance (on Mechanics of English) was above the third grade norm. On tests of oral reading, his responses were even more outstanding than on the silent reading and other educational tests. On the Gray Oral Reading Paragraphs, he received a grade-equivalent of 6.1. On the Gilmore Oral Reading Test, his grade-equivalent was 8.3 (superior rating) in Accuracy, and 4.1 (superior rating) in Comprehension. His Rate Score was 84 words per minute (fast). His main errors were mispronunciations made when he was reading far beyond his comprehension level. This was partly traceable to the fact that he attempted, usually with success, to pronounce all new words. J has mastered an unusual number of sight words and has attained skill in unlocking new words through phonetic analysis. His performance on these tests is really remarkable. In responding to the tests J was enthusiastic and self-confident in the beginning but was less interested toward the end.

### Personality Aspects

J is an interesting, likeable four year old boy. At first, he was somewhat inattentive. He often wanted to digress from the tests. He preferred not to attempt anything he thought to be "too hard," yet, when encouraged, he was often quite capable of performing difficult tasks successfully. During the final testing, however, J was more poised and compliant. He appeared eager to continue the testing and was pleased when opportunities to excel were offered. In an effort to obtain recognition and praise, J explained to the examiner how he performed feats in multiplication, or how he was able to add four columns of figures.

J's mother reported that he presents no unusual problem at home. He thoroughly enjoys reading and particularly likes to play games. He is cooperative at home, and does chores such as hanging up his clothes, putting away his toys, and setting the dinner table.

J has a strong attachment for his father, and attempts to please him. J's father spends much time and effort in stimulating and guiding J's development. This boy has few friends outside the family but appears to get along well with other boys and girls when he is with them. He is a fairly happy child who seems especially well pleased with himself when others are pleased with him. There are many occasions for this type of satisfaction since his outstanding mental ability is reflected in almost everything he does.

J attends the kindergarten of a public school in a suburb of Chicago. During the first half of the school year he had few friends within the group. His was chiefly a teacher-child relationship at that time.

However, it is felt by the school that J has made great gains in his social and emotional adjustment during the year at school. He has become friendly with many of the other children and has invited them to his home to play. His teacher believes that he has benefited greatly from the school experience. He has grown less excitable and restless. Part of this improvement is attributed, both by the parents and the teachers, to his success in group activities; for example, he was selected to represent the kindergarten at the School Council Meeting. He reported the experience to the members of his class who expressed their admiration of his ability to tell the story of the meeting. Although the other children know that J can read and write, they do not seem to recognize the extent of his superiority. Therefore, they accept him as one of the group.

#### Interpretations and Suggestions

There can be no question of J's superior gifts in abstract intelligence. He is not only mentally bright, but he seems to have the drive and motivation that enable him profitably to use his ability. His achievement in reading is extraordinary. Not only does J read test materials with success, but he also reads books and magazines successfully. He read fluently and with understanding from basal readers (*Merry Hearts and Bold* and *The Brave and the Free*) designed for fifth and sixth grade pupils. He also read passages from *The Readers Digest* and from *My Weekly Reader*, No.

6 with accuracy and a high degree of comprehension. Interesting also is the fact that J can read Hebrew.

The language development of this boy is so anomalous that one is at a loss to explain its origin. Undoubtedly the encouragement of his parents and the unusual opportunities at home are important factors in his accelerated development. But his ability to apply phonetic principles, to spell unusual words, to solve arithmetic problems and to engage successfully in many complex learning activities can hardly be accounted for solely in terms of unusual environmental provisions and opportunities. J is a boy whose mental ability seems so unusual that one must explain much of his performance in terms of a very fortunate endowment.

What will the future hold for this precocious boy? One can only speculate concerning his development. It is to be hoped that means will be found to direct and foster his future growth in effective ways and to channel his remarkable ability into individually profitable and socially desirable pursuits. Recognition of his outstanding ability is a first step. With the help of intelligent parents and with the opportunities which good schools and understanding counsellors may offer, it is to be hoped that the youthful promise of this boy may be realized in constructive endeavor and in the type of contribution to society which only the most gifted can make.

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## Dear Mr. Chairman

As the eighth graders came slowly and quietly into the room for English, the teacher was immediately aware of a disconcerting atmosphere. The happy and enthusiastic bustle which even the prospects of an English class had until now failed to dampen was missing. Yes, something was wrong. But what?

Then the principal, Mrs. Magee, appeared in the doorway.

"Mrs. Stegall," she said, "I think I might give these boys and girls some information which they've been asking for today. It is about Mr. Kendal. He—"

A groan went up from the class as tragedy was registered in twenty-five pairs of eyes.

"Oh, no," moaned Nancy.

"He isn't—" began Rosemary.

"Gosh," muttered another.

"Now, wait a minute," said Mrs. Magee. "Mr. Kendall hasn't been drafted yet."

"Good!" chorused the class with an audible sigh.

"He has just received notice to appear before his draft board, but Mr. Thomas, our superintendent, is going to meet with the board in the morning and ask that he be deferred until school is out," explained Mrs. Magee.

"Reckon he will be?" wondered one as the principal left the room.

"He's got to be," vowed another.

"He's the best history teacher we ever had," contributed a third.

"Why can't they leave him alone just until school is out?" complained another.

"Mrs. Stegall, is there anything we can do?" Billie Sue appealed to the English teacher.

"Nothing that I know of," answered the teacher. "Unless, of course, you would like to write letters to the draft board in his behalf," she added, grasping at a straw.

"Could we?"

"Let's do!"

"Who would we write to?"

"Would it do any good?"

"When would we write them?"

"Whoa!" laughed the teacher. "One at a time. Certainly you may write letters if you want to. Only time will tell whether your efforts will do any good. Since Mr. Thomas is going before the draft board in the morning, he might even deliver the letters in person. But that means, of course, we have only forty-five minutes left in the class in which to write them."

"Let's get started," chorused the group without a moment's hesitation.

"How do you write that kind of letter?" asked a practical one.

Recognizing the Angel Opportunity and seizing what he so graciously offered, the teacher guided the class into a short, concise, and effective discussion of letter writing. Without much ado she secured the necessary address from the superintendent's office and wrote the correct form of the letter on the board for the children to copy.

The class discussion led to the realiza-

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tion that perhaps three paragraphs would be necessary to get the students' ideas over to the draft board. The three general ideas were:

1. Why the class is writing the letters
2. What kind of teacher Mr. Kendall is
3. Good teachers are hard to get

In order to save time then, the teacher offered to write on the board problem words they might need as they wrote. With a last warning that the letters must have an interested and sincere tone if they were to appeal to the recipients, the teacher urged each one to "dig in."

"Dig in" they did! Requests for necessary words came quietly and quickly. As the teacher walked among the students, she was asked pertinent questions.

"What's wrong with this sentence? I can't make it come out right."

"What's a better word here?"

"Would these two sentences be better made into one?"

"Is this silly?"

"Is this too long for one sentence?"

"Does this say what I mean?"

"Is this good English?"

"Do I put a comma here?"

"Should this word be capitalized?"

One child across the room held up her hand for help. When the teacher nodded, Sharon motioned for the teacher to come to her desk saying, "May I have some curb service please?" And with that another world-shaking problem in writing was settled.

Some youngsters wrote with gusto, scribbling off their letters in nothing flat, correcting, re-reading, and then copying. Others wrote slowly and laboriously weighing each word, phrase, and sentence carefully and critically. As the letters were

finished, the teacher read each one hurriedly, pointing out only the grossest errors, which the writer immediately corrected. Several had to be re-written entirely, but many could be corrected without copying.

When the bell rang, six letters were yet unfinished. A quick check revealed that all six writers lived in town and therefore did not have to leave to ride the bus. The teacher invited the six to remain as long as necessary to finish these all-important business letters. No thought of not finishing entered their minds. These youngsters were completely unaware of the stir around them as the others gathered up books and wraps to leave.

Quiet comments drifted back as the students left the room.

"I hope they read 'em."

"They'd just better."

"I gave 'em all I had."

"Me too."

"That was pretty good fun."

"Wasn't it though?"

"I hope mine does some good."

Ten minutes later when the last child had finished her letter and left the room, the teacher carefully checked the letters with mounting amazement as she read each. For a class that had shown until then very little ability or initiative for writing anything, it had done a surprisingly fine and gratifying job with these letters. They were frank and sincere. They were purposeful. They flowed out naturally from the inner recesses of the very hearts of a group of completely uninhibited youngsters who were making a plea in behalf of someone they loved, admired, and respected. Using an English class for such a purpose gave importance to that very



English class itself.

Mr. Kendall was the new junior high school history teacher. He was young, handsome, and single! It was his first year to teach. The girls were in love with him for obvious reasons, of course, but the entire class had, from the very first day of school, recognized in him one who commanded their respect by demanding firm but just discipline, by expecting passably good work, and by simply *being young* with them.

Excerpts from their letters testify to the students' mental attitudes and to their latent writing ability.

From an average student:

"This is the first time I have learned so much in history. I enjoy being in his class, and I always look forward to it with a great deal of happy anticipation."

From a student failing:

"Mr. Kendall is a good teacher to me and everybody else. He does not give me good grades but I do not earn them."

From an above-the-average boy:

"I have disliked history every year until this. He has made it very interesting. If he is drafted, we will probably get some old woman teacher who will make the class seem dull . . . Just leave him until school is out in May, please."

From another:

"As you know, good teachers are hard

to get. I don't think anyone could find a teacher in the United States much better than Mr. Kendall . . . It would be a tragedy to take him away from us. I'm sure too that you wouldn't want a bunch of dumb kids in the service later who didn't know a thing about history."

From the problem child:

"I am writing to you about my eighth grade teacher Mr. Kendall who is about to be drafted into the army. He is a pretty good teacher, but I don't like him very much. He pops off too much in class, but I wish you would let him stay a little longer. He is better than most of the others."

Mr. Kendall was deferred until the first of June. Whether the letters carried any weight is something the teacher will never know because the letters were not answered. Content not to look a gift horse in the mouth, she is also content with the results. At the end of the year she asked on a test, "What has been of most value to you in English this year? Why?"

An answer which the teacher likes to believe expressed the sentiment of the class was written by a boy:

"The thing that has been of most value to me in English this year is letter writing. We have written letters before but the one we wrote about Mr. Kendall was not just a fake. It taught me that good letters get success."

And it taught the teacher that grasping and using purposeful straws "get success."



## "To Teacher, with Love"

The paper lay wrinkled and unevenly folded on my desk that bright fall day. I first noticed it when my roomful of lively second graders poured into the room from recess, red-faced and tingling from the crisp air outside. There was an appearance of mystery about the paper as it lay with its childlike message scrawled inside. A large red heart dominated the bottom half of the page, and the letter was brief and to the point:

Dear Miss Ware: If you were my teacher every year, I would be glad. I love you very much.

From Jimmy

I smiled and folded the letter carefully. The large, dark eyes of the sender watched devotedly my every move. So the ice was finally broken! By some unknown miracle this uncommunicative child had been reached. Naturally, I had always looked forward to receiving little notes of love from my pupils, but Jimmy's letter breathed something special. *It needed an answer.*

"Thank you for the letter. It was very nice," I printed on a sheet of paper as the class sat anticipating chapter four of *The Adventures of Dr. Dolittle*. My answer I delivered with proper ceremony and attention from everyone in the room. Instead of being a nonentity, Jimmy was suddenly a mysterious recipient of a message from the teacher. "What is it?" some of Jimmy's neighbors whispered, but Jimmy smiled shyly at me and tucked the paper in his shirt pocket. Then and there I resolved, "If any child takes the time and thought to write me a letter, it's going to be

answered!"

Jimmy's simple letter started my correspondence with children, an experience I recommend to any teacher. Theorists cry, "The child must feel a need to write." A dormant language arts curriculum can be brought to life when children know their letters to the teacher will not end up in the wastebasket. Receiving answers to their letters spurs children to write more and more. It can open the door to a virtual flood of letters.

As a matter of fact, I had almost given up trying to motivate the free, spontaneous writing I wanted those second graders to enjoy when an avalanche of notes descended on my desk. They were doubtless inspired by Jimmy's prolific output that netted me at least one letter a day for two months. Children began to ask how to spell certain words and form certain letters. I'll never forget when Jimmy's mother came to school to discover what magic prompted her son's sudden interest in spelling and handwriting. "He prefers writing to TV," she declared in bewilderment. Words from undergraduate education courses sprang to bloom with new meaning: "Interest," "motivation," and "reward" suddenly became real and not empty professional bromides.

Because it comes from the heart, a letter to the teacher cannot be limited in any respect. It cannot be assigned. Most of the writing children produce speaks a simple, "To teacher, with love." But once

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in awhile youngsters feel they must tell the teacher other important facts. Blue-eyed Linda wrote me a letter in appreciation for some books I had purchased with P.T.A. money. "Thank you for the books," she said. "Now we can read new books and we are tired of reading the old books."

As I reread my treasures children have sent me through the years, I can't help remembering my own school days. No teacher would ever receive a letter from me! Teacher was the person who made everyone copy writing exercises from miserable penmanship books. All the letters we wrote were exact replicas of her adult expressions. Woe be to anyone who forgot to include a vital comma! That unfortunate soul had to stay after school and copy the letter over until it was "right." Above all, every word must be spelled correctly—after all, wasn't letter writing imposed so the teacher could determine if her pupils knew how to spell and form letters without errors?

Fortunately for today's children, a few people like Hughes Mearns have influenced elementary school language arts in the direction of creative writing. Consequently, none of the letters I receive from children are ever required or corrected. Sometimes, however, I open the door by extending an invitation. Two years ago, for example, I spent Christmas vacation in California. Before leaving my school in New York, I put my holiday address on the board. "This is where I'll be for the next two weeks," I announced. "If any of you would like to write, I would be glad to hear from you." At least half the class wrote. One child apparently thought I intended staying, for he wrote "Please come back and be our teacher!"

Primary teachers frequently complain, "We have such a hard time getting the children to write." In many cases I've found that everything a pupil produces is corrected until the creativity is squeezed dry. Or perhaps a teacher misses one chance to motivate writing by not answering letters pupils give her. One mother told me, "Jane loves to write people, but you are the only one who answers." Jane still writes me. Her letters may be messy and misspelled, but they are full of information vital to her. A recent message follows:

Dear Miss Ware,

There are 29 children. There are 9 girls and 19 boys. and as I notice there is a 9 in every number. everthing that is erasted I did not know. we have been out of school so many times that I am not used to it. I'll have to go now because Janice is crying. Goodby now with love.

Janie

In addition to the spontaneous offerings children bring me while they are in my class, I often continue to receive letters from youngsters in previous groups. One little girl wrote while in the second grade, "Our paraket Peaches didn't lay any eggs, so I guess she is a boy." The following year she notified me via letter what had happened in her life:

Guess what I got for Christmas well I got a black Raccing bike and a Ballerina doll and a case. and a purse and sweater and a pigeon and a inanicare set from Larry. we have a bicycle club and Im pres. and Ronnie is vice pres and Jimmy is sec and Larry is tres. now I have 3 pigeons and show girl had two eggs and they hatched last week and they are so cute. and snow white layed a egg this morning roo and candy havsent layed eaney yet but she's going to pretty soon. well i have to take a bath now so i better go. with all my love

Larrine

Beside motivating boys and girls to write letters, interest sparked through correspondence can be flamed into the fire of storytelling or other creative activities. Once a child remarked disappointedly, "I wanted to write you, but I didn't know what to say." "How about telling me a story then," I encouraged him.

Speaking of stories, I should point out that letters are not the only spontaneous contributions children bring their teacher. In fact, I've had groups where very little letter writing of an unsolicited nature transpired. Instead the youngsters composed stories for me and delivered them with the same joy others take in delivering letters. I'll never forget the third grader who arrived in my class with the reputation of being one of the most notorious behavior problems in school. One morning James appeared clutching a handmade manila folder containing the following story "just for you and no one else:"

#### The Little Old Man and the Gobbling Witch

Once upon a time there lived a old man. The old man lives in the woods. One day the little old man went for a walk in the woods. The old man walk on and on until he came to a trap. It was a witch trap.

The next day the old man went for a nother walk in the woods. This time he came to a cave. He went in the cave. He fell in a hole. It was witch's hole. The witch said Ho! ho! ho! ho! to the man. The man got from kicking and wiggled.

So he ran as fast as he can run. The gobbling witch said I well get you at the end.

James still corresponds with me. Last Christmas he composed a lengthy account of his trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art with the fourth graders. He continues to write stories for the notebook I gave him last year. He also continues to amaze the principal who wonders, "What became of James—I don't see him any more."

My collection of letters from children often causes fellow teachers to ask, "How did you get so many?" There is no magic formula. Children's letters spring freely from the heart when they have the need to say something. Some children never write beyond what is required in class. Still others write because they know their friends are corresponding.

But once a letter is written, there exists no stronger incentive to write more than to receive an answer of some kind. I don't always write back—a comment to the child often suffices. Likewise, opportunity to encourage writing can knock more than once during the term. Vacation periods or trips by the teacher offer opportune writing possibilities.

A letter to the teacher can be a valuable experience for boys and girls. Likewise, it can be one of the pleasurable rewards of teaching and one of many ways to stimulate writing. As one child told me, "Your letters are the nicest in the world."

LESTER R. WHEELER  
AND  
EDWIN H. SMITH

## A Modification of the Informal Reading Inventory

It has long been known by those who work closely with children that grade placement scores on reading tests for primary grades often have little relationship to the child's actual instructional reading level. In the Reading Clinic we have found that pupils who cannot read a primer will often score above the second grade reading level on some standardized reading tests. Naturally, we expect some variation, but it should be much less. We have found that certain primary grade reading tests tend to estimate a child's reading level approximately one grade level or more above the book level he can read for instructional purposes (4), substantiating the findings of Killgallon (1) a decade and a half ago. These findings are very important to the primary teacher in her classwork.

It has been suggested that, in order to offset the over-estimations of standardized primary reading tests, we teach the child about one year below the standardized test level. Undercutting the test level about one grade seems to work satisfactorily on most tests. The errors tend to balance out and we have the reading instructional level of the average or statistical child; but it does not work with those who deviate widely from the normal.

Betts (1) and others have suggested practical methods for determining a child's instructional level through the use of basal readers to supplement the results of other

tests. It is not our purpose in this article to enter a controversy over the readability of basal readers or the construction of group standardized primary reading tests. Our problem is more fundamental. The basic graded readers are our principal source material for the teaching of the primary child. If we are going to use the graded reader we must know the grade level book the child can read.

Basic readers and other materials differ in readability from series to series (1, 2, 3,). They differ in the number of new words introduced per page, in sentence length, in percentage of new words per page, and in other readability factors. Readers differ in methodology, some readers being designed for use with a preparatory book and others with a supplementary book. Readers differ in interest level, with some readers high and others low in interest level. These and other differences have been noted by primary teachers and clinicians.

As the philosophy of individual differences reaches the action or practical stage, we may expect more and more emphasis placed upon a closer relation of the reading level of the child and the readability of materials. It is apparent that standardized reading tests for the primary

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grades often give a misleading idea of individual children's instructional level and the readers also differ in readability from series to series since both tests and graded readers present problems in practical teaching situations it would seem that another method of estimating a child's reading level is needed.

At the University of Miami Reading Clinic we use a combination of informal reading inventories such as selecting several paragraphs at random in several graded readers of a series and estimating the reading levels from these paragraph samplings. This method supplements other tests and is a practical test of reading in an actual schoolroom situation. It is important to select a set of readers of controlled readability and interest levels and the samplings should be based on a fair sampling of the book used. In order to reduce this risk we have added another step to the reading inventories.

### **Suggestions on How to Find a Child's Reading Level**

1. Select a series of good basic readers which will, in your opinion, best suit the child.
2. Estimate roughly, from a standardized reading test, the child's instructional reading level and select a reader about one grade under the standardized test level or grade placement.
3. Have the child read the first complete sentence at the beginning of the pages sampled and keep a record of his errors. A suggested form for recording errors is given on page 226.
4. As the child reads, count as errors mispronunciations, omissions, substitutions, hesitations over three seconds, distortions and word assists by the teacher. Do not count as errors mistakes on proper names.
5. If the percentage of errors per hundred words is more than three to five percent, drop down to the next grade level in the series. If the percentage of errors is less

than two percent move up to the next grade level in the series.

6. When you have found the level at which the child's errors constitute approximately three to five percent of the running words, test his paragraph reading. Select four or five paragraphs and have the child read these, both silently and orally, noting the difficulties.
7. Remember that series differ in difficulty; Therefore, teach the child in the series used to evaluate him, or retest him in the series to be used for instruction.
8. If the child passes the sentence test but not the paragraph test, teach him on the level indicated by the sentence test. This holds true ONLY on the primary level because at this level few children have difficulty with the concepts offered, and the vocabulary problem is not so much one of meaning as of recognition.
9. Children who show difficulties of organization, retention, and understanding can be taught in material where they know at least ninety-five percent of the running words.
10. We might summarize the following practical underlying assumptions from clinical and teaching experience:
  - (a) A child can read materials without any assistance when he knows and understands 98 - 99% of vocabulary and comprehends 75 - 90% of main ideas. This is his independent, library, or free reading level.
  - (b) The child's instructional or teaching level is where he knows and understands the meaning of 95 - 98% of vocabulary and comprehends about 75 - 90% of main ideas. "Instructional level" implies the child needs word analysis of unknown words and comprehension direction.
  - (c) The child's frustration level is when he recognizes or knows less than 95% of vocabulary and comprehends less than 75% of the main ideas. Frustration in reading generally increases with a decrease in recognition, meaning vocabulary, and general comprehension of materials he is reading.
11. One of the main purposes of the diagnosis is to determine the free reading, instruc-

tional levels for teaching purposes, and also to learn the frustration level where the

material is too difficult for the child to read.

### Informal Reading Inventory Check Sheet

Used at University of Miami Reading Clinic

Name _____	Date _____	Age _____	Grade _____
<i>Vocabulary Difficulties</i>		Series Used _____	
Phonics poor _____		Instructional level _____	
Syllabication poor _____		Independent level _____	
Use of configuration poor _____		Frustration level _____	
Use of picture clue poor _____		Probable Mental level _____	
Sight vocabulary poor _____		<i>Comprehension Difficulties</i>	
Use of context poor _____		Sentence reading poor _____	
		Paragraph reading poor _____	
<i>Perception difficulties</i>		Memory poor _____	
Reverses words _____		Organization poor _____	
Reverses letters _____		Detail reading poor _____	
Omits beginnings _____		<i>Rate Difficulties</i>	
Omits endings _____		Directional problem _____	
Omits words _____		Word by word reader _____	
Sounds confused _____		Regression movements _____	
Sounds added _____		Points at words _____	
Omits sounds _____		Loses place easily _____	
Other factors _____			

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## Am I Teaching Phonics Right?

Teachers everywhere are uncertain whether they are doing the right thing about phonics. Their question, spoken or unspoken, is, "Am I teaching Phonics right?"

To answer this question for any particular teacher would require a knowledge of a vast number of circumstances. But there are certain general principles that all teachers can apply to their own situations and that will help them arrive at an answer.

### Two Extremes

Two questions can be asked by any teacher to help her tell if she is "teaching phonics right." One question is, "Is phonics killing interest in reading?" If the answer to this is "yes," then something surely is wrong. Nothing in the world takes the place of interest in reading. If a child loses this, he has lost the main thing on which a lifetime reading habit depends. Only interest in reading will keep him continually attempting to read what he finds before him and so keep him learning more and more year by year. It is not sufficient to say, "We will ignore interest for a while and after we have taught phonics we will make reading interesting." All experience tells us that with many children the effect of a period of disinterest and dislike will never be overcome. *Some* may overcome it, but we must think of those who do not. They are valuable individuals. They cannot be ignored. Even if *most* of the children overcome the period of dislike, we must still think of the few who do not. Is the school justified in doing *anything*, no

matter how it helps the most, which damages the few? Anything that harms them *must* be wrong. So, thinking of every one of the children, the teacher can ask herself, "Is phonics killing interest in reading?"

The second question every teacher must ask herself is, "Is interest in reading killing phonics?" It is natural and right for us to put interest in reading first. We must maintain it at all times. But as a natural result, many teachers are just afraid to stop to compare one word with another. Someone has told them that they must not "teach words." So with all our preparing for stories and our reading of stories and our discussing of stories, words never get attention. The child never gets a chance to find out that some words begin alike or end alike or have other identical parts. Phonics "gets left out." This is the more likely to happen when all are asked to read to themselves and then when only the good readers are asked to read aloud. In such a case the teacher is not made aware of the need of phonics and tends to forget it. So we all must ask quite definitely, "Just how much time each day do *I* devote to sounding, and how much time each day does *each child* devote to sounding?" Only then can we tell if "Interest in reading is killing phonics."

### "Cold Storage" Phonics

"Cold storage education" is still with us at many points. The cold storage idea is based on the rule, "Memorize it now and

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use it later." That rule sounds good except for two difficulties. First, it takes effort to memorize anything. How will we get the child to put forth that effort? Second, memorizing is no good if it disappears, and experience shows that most of what is memorized in school does so disappear.

"Cold-Storage" phonics often seem to work in the school at certain places and for certain children, but it does so for two definite reasons. First, if a child has an overpowering urge to learn to read, he will put forth the effort to memorize anything that he thinks will help him. Second, for these children, what is memorized does not disappear because they themselves find immediate use for it. If they learn a principle of phonics, they immediately begin to use it on words they say, or words they read. So for them it is not a case of "cold storage," but of "immediate use." But what shall we say about cold-storage phonics for those children who do *not* put forth the effort to memorize, and who do *not* find use for what they memorize?

Some persons believe that the difficulties of cold storage learning do not apply to their teaching of phonics because they say they motivate the memorizing by their personal influence on the children or by class competition and that the use comes just a short time later so that the memorizing is not forgotten. This is the most favorable possibility; real motivation and quick use. But we must point out that conditions for the cold storage method are very often not so favorable. Though we do our best, we just cannot motivate many children. And careful observation will show that the use of many principles comes so much later that many children have for-

gotten them. So while we admit the favorable possibility, we must not overlook the less favorable actual situation in many school rooms.

Obviously, the safer way is to make phonics useful from the start. The rule then is, "Learn what we can use, and use what we learn." No one can go wrong with such a rule for learning. But use does not mean just use in a few exercises. The child does not see exercises as very "useful," and exercises will make little impression on many children. "Use" means daily use in reading. We must see that such use is made. But remember our first counsel, "Do not let Phonics kill interest in reading."

### Non-Phonetic Words

To tell whether she is "teaching phonics right," the teacher must consider what she is doing with words that are not phonetic and which therefore do not fit into her plan or system. Any teacher of reading must take into account two classes of non-phonetic words, and any teacher can ask herself what she is doing about each of them.

The first class of non-phonetic words is made up of the many common words that do not fit into any system of phonics. For instance, "of" is sounded by many persons as "uv," and no rules take care of such sounds for the letters in "of." Such a word just has to be told, and the quicker the better. There is no excuse for letting a child study or struggle over such a word and then telling him, "Well, it can't be sounded anyway." Such a thing is a waste of time and does a great harm to self-confidence. Does this happen in a class? What is being done to prevent it? Are

non-phonetic words told at once? Such a question can be asked herself by any teacher.

The second group of words are those which are "at the moment" non-phonetic. For instance, suppose we have taught the sound of "s" in "see" and "some," and the like. Then the child meets the word "is" in which the "s" is sounded as a "z." Such a word is "at the moment" non-phonetic.

Here is a major problem in any teaching of phonics. Consider a simple system which reduces practical phonics to 13 Steps. All through this teaching, words are phonetic to the child "at the moment" only if they fit the steps which he has *already learned*. If he knows only the simple sounds of "t" and "h," the word "them" is for him "at the moment" non-phonetic. If only the short vowels have been taught, then the word "hope" is "at the moment" non-phonetic.

Most important, this principle applies to different children in the same room in different ways. Only the teacher who knows well each pupil's progress in sounding can determine just which words to tell any particular pupil, or just which words to ask that particular pupil to attempt to sound out. Here is a very great problem in the teaching of phonics. Any sounding curriculum that assigns certain sounds to certain months of certain grades and expects all children to have reached the same stage of learning will fail utterly at this point. Much depends on the method of handling of these "at the moment" non-phonetic words if the teacher is to answer the question, "Am I teaching phonics right?"

#### **Children Differ in Phonic Ability**

It is amazing to find so many children

who, even before entering school, can sound out almost any word. Where did they learn this? The answer probably is that they have a very fine ear for word sounds, they very early noticed how words began and ended, they compared words they heard with other words and became skilled at such comparing, and they have studied the words they have learned from signs and newspapers and magazines and discovered the correspondence between letters and sounds. Perhaps they did this without the adults about them being aware of what they were doing.

At the other extreme, we find boys even in high school who are astonished to be told that in spelling there is a correspondence between the sounds of letters and the sound of the word those letters spell. They have gone through all of elementary school without knowing that letters really meant sounds. They have probably been told this a hundred times and they have sat through phonic lessons, but the idea never did penetrate. This means simply that they have very poor "ears" for sounds and so have never tried to use sounding.

The teacher of any class may not have in it either of these extremes, but she will have a great range of ability in hearing sounds and in combining sounds into words. The hearing comes first. It has been called "analysis." The child hears parts of words as he looks at printed words, and so learns how sounds or parts of sounds correspond to letters. Then there is a second ability, called "synthesis," which a child uses when he is sounding out new words. He sees the letters, thinks their sounds, and from these gets the total word. Of course the letter sounds never give the

exact word. There is always a gap between the series of letter sounds, and the natural saying of the word. This gap has to be bridged by the child if he is to "get" the new word. Some children are good at this and do it easily. Others have great difficulty, and the teacher tends to think of them as "dull" or slow-witted in some way. A teacher who has such an idea shows impatience in her voice and manner, and the child is at once confused and disturbed and does still worse. Instead, we must show constant kindness and try to help the child. If he has demonstrated that he can say the letter sounds, we should praise him for that. Then we may have to say these sounds ourselves so that he can listen and try to get the word. We may have to say the letter sounds closer and closer together until he can tell what the word is. Many children need great help in this "synthesis" of sounds. They are just different from others in this respect and are not to be scolded for this natural defect.

In short, the teacher asking herself the question, "Am I Teaching Phonics Right?" must always ask herself, first, if she is constantly aware of these great individual differences, and, second, whether she is allowing for them both in her feeling toward the pupils and in the help she gives each one.

#### Am I going fast enough, or too fast?

If a teacher is sure that children should "Learn what they can use and use what they learn," she is sure not to go way ahead of her class and leave them struggling behind. Then if the teacher is conscious of the great individual differences in sounding ability in the class, she knows that some will be learning and using phonics far ahead of others, and other children will

be learning phonics far behind the others. In other words, the class will be "spread out" in their learning and using. Granted all this, how is a teacher to tell if she is going fast enough for the group or going too fast for many?

First, let us acknowledge that the more capable children in the class will be far ahead of any teacher's plan. They will be on their own, and they will be doing fine. Let us not worry about them. Second, let us realize that we can never hold back to the pace of the least capable in sounding in the class. These children will need individual help in one way or another. "A reading pal" may sit beside each one and be able to suggest the sound that words begin with or remind the child of the sounds of letters that he has forgotten, and so on. Or in preparation for reading, we may look directly at some such child and put in a suggestion intended just for him. Or in the reading such a child may do aloud, we may help with certain words or have others help. The slow always need extra help. We must plan to give it.

What about the range in between the very fast and the very slow? How fast should we go for them? To answer this question, we need to remember that we must keep phonics both a *help* and a *challenge*. The children are always using some principles that they do not yet know very well. Using what they know means that sounding is a *help*. If they are to use all they can, we may need often to remind them of how to attack certain words or remind them of sounds already learned. We may have to say "Remember *ch* as in church" when we see a word coming up with this beginning. Or "Remember the special sound of *e* in *er*" if we see that will

be needed. They must realize that what they know can be of use. The other side of the picture, the *challenge*, means an emphasis on "something new" that they will be able to learn and use. We may ask, "How might we spell the *tion* in attention?" and they will be surprised to find out that they actually say *shun*. They will be anxious to discover if they say that in all words they know that end in *tion*. So while the appeal of the old is one of usefulness, the appeal of the new is one of curiosity. The child needs both. Are they getting both? If the new is lacking, you are going too slow. If they are not able to feel the easy usefulness of the old, you are going too fast. There must be a balance between the two.

#### Sounding and Context

We are not teaching phonics right if the children always take their reading words out of context and struggle with them as if they stood alone. The purpose of phonics is not to work out words independently. Its purpose is to help in reading. Words in reading always have context. This means that as the child is reading along, he is imagining what is coming next. He will realize this if he notices that before he turns a page, he is thinking what the rest of the sentence at the top of the next page will be.

So one of the questions to help a child in sounding is "What do you think the word is." That is, what does the sentence make you think it is? If the sentence says "The bird \_\_\_\_\_ over the treetops," what might the new word be? It must be "flew" because the bird could not go over the treetops in any other way. Sound it out and see if the word is "flew."

Let us then make sounding very prac-

tical at all times. It is to help in reading. When the child is reading we find that he is very often saying to himself what he thinks the words are going to be. Of course, some children misread in this way. But all should think what the words should be, and *then* if the word looks even a little unfamiliar, they should check by sounding to make sure of what the word is. Always combine context and sounding, and not use either alone. Teaching phonics right includes teaching use of context.

#### Sounding and the Reading Situation

Teaching phonics right also means considering always the actual reading situation. For instance, perhaps we might as well admit that "Nobody will sound all the new words he meets all the time." There are plenty of times when everyone, even a school child, should just skip and go on and get the story. The child who reads many books does just that. Such a child should know how to sound, and he should sound when he is doing a textbook, but his interest reading should not be held back too much by sounding.

Similarly, if a child is reading something aloud to others, he should be told many words instantly just to keep from holding the others back and to avoid interrupting the thoughts read. If that child were to sound out more words, he might learn sounding, but he might also learn embarrassment and dislike of reading. When we are trying to teach one thing, the child may be learning something else.

The situations we have mentioned suggest telling and skipping. They occur very often. We must therefore find situations that suggest careful sounding out. For instance, some one of the children's text books, or even several of them, may con-



tain condensed material that should be completely understood. It must be something in which the thoughts of sentences should be discussed, and even the meaning of individual words. With such material, we can ask for careful, complete reading, which will include attack on every single word. No skipping here. But it must be material that the children are interested in so that they can see the value of getting every word. And we must get them to see that the individual words are important. If we do not, the tendency to skip and get the main idea will persist all the while, and our insistence on careful reading or study will be resented.

### **Sounding and Spelling**

The one place where we can emphasize sounding very thoroughly and with every good reason is in the spelling lesson. It is true that the common words first taken up in the spelling course are short ones and ones which are often nonphonetic, and it is only sensible for children to learn them as visual items, so that they can "see them in the mind's eye" and know if they look right on paper. These common words are also used so often that the visual image of them can be remembered for all time.

But as soon as the common words have been covered, the spelling lessons take up the less common words—words which may not be seen even once a month in reading or writing. These less common words are also likely to be much more phonetic than the common ones. So in the spelling lesson, the children should not blindly try to get a visual image which may soon fade. Instead they should try to learn, first, just how a word is said, and second, just how the letters try to put that sound down on paper. For spelling is try-

ing to turn sounds into letters.

If the children discover that a word is spelled just as it is sounded, then that word will always be easy. If they discover just the point in the word where the letters do not seem to represent the sound of the word, they can remember that "hard spot" and are not likely to forget it. Meantime, they are getting the very best kind of practice in phonics, and getting it without disturbing any reading. So the ideal situation for careful use of phonics is in the spelling lesson after the common, often non-phonetic words, have been covered. So "teaching phonics right" also means teaching phonics in the spelling lesson.

### **New Word Meanings**

From the fourth grade on through high school and even college, the first big job of every teacher is to see that the students know the meaning of the new words in the material to be read so that they will neither skip them or guess them wrong. So "getting the new words" should take a part of the time used for assignment of any lesson any time.

In this learning of new words, the chief emphasis is of course on meaning. Here the context may be used, or the prefix or the root, or the meaning may be told by someone in the class or by the teacher. In class there is seldom time to use the dictionary, though it should be used sometimes just to show its use and value.

But while this new meaning is being thought of, the class will be looking at the word, and then is the time to call attention to the points mentioned under spelling; 1) Exactly how is the word pronounced? 2) Do the letters used fit the sound? 3) If they do not, just where is the hard spot, and how can it be remembered? For we

must remember that the children are likely to have to use this new word in their written papers or examinations.

For a school, therefore, to be "Teaching phonics right," every teacher should call students' attention to sounds and to letters for those sounds while she is teaching the meaning of new words in all subjects.

### What Will the Next Teacher Do?

In every subject, the teacher is haunted by the question of what the next teacher will do. So we are sure no teacher can tell if she is "teaching phonics right" unless she knows what the next teacher will do or expect.

Suppose the teacher of the next grade will say, "I am not going to teach phonics. The children are supposed to have had that before now." In such a case, the children will get no help at all in the next grade. So they must get all the help in sounding now or never. They may not succeed as we would like, but we will have to make a try. In such a case, the teacher will push phonics much more than she naturally would. She will give it more time and emphasis. It will be her duty to do so, even at the risk of some bad effects.

But suppose the next teacher will "take them where she finds them" and continue the growth of each child in the knowledge and practice of sounding. She should do this, knowing that all we can get in any skill is a continual, natural growth. In such a case, a teacher will keep sounding subordinate to interest and meaning. She will keep it in continual use, however, as a means to unlock new words. She will not try to "do tomorrow's work today," but will do today's work well.

### Am I Prejudiced?

The word "prejudice" means to "pre-judge" something. We are all inclined to think that other people are prejudiced and that we are "just right." But such an idea is very unrealistic. We are all prejudiced in many ways. So in this matter of teaching phonics, the teacher will ask, "What are my own prejudices about phonics?"

The only answer to this question of prejudice is to try to see the problem in many lights. Let us listen to the ideas of many people. Let us read books and articles on the subject. Let us not consider that those who disagree with us are either foolish or ignorant or both. Probably they are as honest and as sincere as we are. So why do they think as they do?

For instance, we know some teachers who are enthusiastic about teaching a lot of phonics, and we may find that they teach in favored districts where the children have fine backgrounds and high I. Q.'s. We know some teachers who are opposed to phonics, and we may find that they do not know any phonics themselves or have poor "phonetic ears." We may know some teachers who teach a lot of phonics and may find that they are in foreign settlements where the parents disregard what the children think and feel because that is the European attitude. Or we may know some teachers who want to teach a lot of phonics because they are blissfully unaware of the non-phonetic character of the English language. So whether we find people opposed to phonics or in favor of it, we should look behind and try to find the reason for their opinion. All of this will tend to tell us, "Are we prejudiced ourselves?"

### Conclusion

Every teacher sincerely wants to "teach phonics right." The more experience she has, the more she will realize that it is really very hard to tell whether any particular teacher in any particular school, with certain particular children is teaching phonics in the best way possible to those children.

The biggest problem in telling whether one is teaching phonics right is to keep all the possible considerations in mind at the same time. People make quick and positive answers on a single or on a

slight basis. That is easy to do, but we cannot hope to find the true answer in that way. We must consider all angles of the problem.

We have here listed and discussed the many considerations that teachers and schoolmen and parents too should keep in mind in trying to answer the question, "Am I Teaching Phonics Right?" We hope that in thinking of these considerations we shall come to a more satisfactory answer for ourselves and a better understanding of the answers found by others.

RUTH G. STRICKLAND

## Children, Reading, and Creativity

Children, reading, and creativity—three beads to link together to form a chain. Anne Morrow Lindbergh, on her vacation island, held in her hand one shell after another—turned them in her palm, felt their texture, enjoyed their delicacy of coloring, their exquisite beauty of shape—and around them she fashioned the thoughts which became her "Gift from the Sea." I cannot produce for you what she produced but we can, together, look at first one, then another of the three elements in this topic which has been given me, note its characteristics, and fit the three together into a pattern which may have for us greater significance than each single bead by itself.

Children have been from the beginning the reason for the existence of the elementary school. Schools for children were established in America that children might learn to read. Children and reading we have always taken for granted as the major

substance of the elementary school. But the linking of creativity with these two components is a comparatively recent phenomenon in the uphill path of elementary education.

### Children—Some Basics and Variables

We all recognize the fact that the major task of the child during the elementary school years is that of building the self. Parents help their baby to learn to trust them and others and gradually to learn to trust himself. As he learns to walk and talk, their encouragement, support, and approval make it possible for him to reach out for new experiences. Self reliance and independence in thought and response emerge. Initiative, eagerness to know and to do, begin to fit into a pattern of personal and social controls.

### The child's own emerging concept of

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himself determines in large measure the kind of personality he develops and the kind of person he becomes. It probably determines also his achievement and his happiness in day by day living. His concept of himself in relation to others affects the way he adjusts to them and his whole pattern of social experience.

It is a truism that a child learns his culture as he learns his language. A distinguished psychiatrist and former head of the World Health Organization once told an audience that the basic elements of a child's thinking are all laid down during the preschool years.\* Concepts of time, of space, of life on the earth, of man's relationships with man begin to form during his earliest years as the result of home and family experience. Neighborhood and school experience expand and deepen these concepts or perhaps modify them. The emotional and social development of the child are related to his orientation to the world of things and of persons. His ability to recognize what is real and what is imaginary grows rapidly during these years. If he is helped to recognize reality and to accept responsibility as he is ready for it, a sound foundation is laid for later growth and learning and for the imagining and looking ahead which are essential elements in creativeness.

The environment in which a child grows is both material and psychological. The psychological environment probably has more influence on the child's thinking and the kind of person he becomes than does the physical and material environment. Studies of juvenile delinquency and of mental imbalance make this point in-

creasingly clear. In a loving and admiring family circle, a child builds favorable concepts of himself which may be uncomfortably altered by contacts with a group of peers on the school playground or by the teacher in school. Experience in a neglectful, rejecting or over-critical family or one at odds with its neighbors sets up a different pattern of emotional response toward people and a different concept of self. Emotion is a motivating force of great power. It is "one of the great driving forces of human behavior, including thoughtful behavior (4, p. 170)."

Attitudes are outgrowths of emotional experience. They "determine for each individual what he will see and hear, what he will think and what he will do" (1, p. 806). Even young children on entrance to school may have highly developed attitudes which are the result of their own reaction to their experience and their interpretation of it. Their opinions, sentiments, prejudices, biases, and stereotypes are not as rigid as those of adults, but they have been in the process of construction since early childhood. Emotions and attitudes are parts of the process of thinking and bear clear relationship to interests and to levels of aspiration.

During their preschool and elementary school years, children acquire an enormous collection of understandings. Concept formation moves from simple to complex, from concrete to abstract, from discrete or diffuse to organized, from egocentric to social. Errors in children's concepts and the differences from child to child in rate of development prove the process of concept formation to be a complex one and one which requires time and a measure of conscious and purposeful effort for growth in

\*Brock Chrisholm. Patton Foundation Lecture at Indiana University, November 16, 1955.

understanding.

The concepts a child develops are his working materials for problem solving and also, as we shall see, for reading and for creative thinking. Children bring the concepts they have developed to bear on all manner of problems and use them in a great variety of ways. Their persistent demands for information, particularly in their "why" questions, show interest in problem-solving on an intellectual level. Even young children are capable of a wide variety of activities in solving problems. These activities may include general reaction to the problem situation, some discrimination regarding the elements that compose it, recall of situations that are related, and critical thinking regarding possible solutions. It is also true that children may impetuously jump from awareness of the problem to some solution, influenced mainly by their emotional reactions, rather than do any real thinking through of the problem and its relationships (4).

Children live, as Russell says, in a world full of ideas. Only very gradually does a child become aware of the fact that for his purposes some of these ideas are better than others. He needs help in developing power to think critically about ideas and to evaluate them. It takes time and guidance for him to learn to examine concrete and verbal materials in the light of related objective evidence, to compare them with the standards and norms he is developing, and to arrive at a conclusion or plan of action that is in harmony with the standards he is accepting.

Every teacher who has encouraged or even permitted children to be themselves knows that children's thinking often dis-

plays delightful freshness and creativeness. Creative thinking is closely related to critical thinking and problem solving. Critical thinking can produce new insights and problem solving may result in new combinations of ideas and new solutions or original and unconventional action, all of which is based on previous experience and real life conditions but goes a step beyond them. Creative thinking resembles problem solving most closely when the child reaches the stage of putting his feelings, ideas, and images into tangible form through the medium of words or of paint, clay, construction materials, rhythmic movement, song, or dramatizations.

The major difference between creative thinking and problem solving probably lies in the fact that creative thinking is freer, more personal, while problem solving must fit into a framework of fact. The inventor, the scientist and the artist may have much in common but there is great variation in their manifestations of creativeness. The creative thinking of the artist, the composer, or the writer may be more concerned with evoking emotional reaction than with any practical solution which can result in action.

Young children are often creative in their use of language and in their play. During the school years they may be creative also in their use of art materials, in dramatics, music and rhythm, and in some of their writing. Their creativeness may carry over to their choice of reading material, the purposes for which they read, their mental constructs as they read, and their reaction to the reading.

As a child reads, he recognizes words, puts meaning into them from his own mind, conjures up the mental pictures that



those meanings elicit, reacts to them, makes it all—meanings, pictures, emotional and intellectual reactions—a part of himself. Creative imagination is necessary in order to attach meaning from his store of concepts and make the meanings come to life in his mind.

All of these observations are universally true of children and probably will always be. There are major differences, however, between children today and children in the days of my childhood and probably yours, however young you are. Today's children early learn to recognize numbers on a television dial and through watching the clock for their favorite programs. Even before they come to school many of them know what maps are and have traveled widely in the family car, some even abroad with their service-men fathers. Many of them have books—one watches them making their selections in the supermarkets and ten-cent stores and their parents spend money regularly on books. These children because of their experience have a vocabulary of words and meanings far in advance of children a generation ago. Their interests take them afield from the home into science and other vital interests commonly considered the province of adults. We badly need new studies of children's vocabulary, of their concepts of time, space, and number, of their interests, and of the extent and depth of their general knowledge. We are still referring to studies that were exceedingly helpful a generation ago but certainly are less valid today.

The changes in children due to their broader experience present a tremendous challenge to elementary school teachers. The variety and excitement children find in television, radio, and motion pictures is

hard to compete with in the school. Children have learned to observe and listen, but they have learned equally well some habits of giving only fringe attention or of turning off sound altogether while they live with their own thoughts and fantasies. Children have had brief exposures to a great variety of subjects which are presented in programs on the television screen and lack the background for fitting what they see into any sort of perspective. They cannot know how small a fragment of knowledge they have achieved and may stand in danger of becoming content with smatterings of superficial, surface knowledge. Truly creative experience with reading should help to meet the basic developmental needs of children and also feed their expanding interests and help them gain wholesome values from their experience with the newer media.

#### How Children Become Readers

A great deal has been written in recent months about how we teach reading and the quality of our product. I shall not deal with that here except to say that if reading be taught only as a skill or a "subject" many children will never learn to love reading nor to use their skill profitably.

If a child is to love reading, his first experience should be in listening to stories—stories told, not read. Vicars Bell of England says in his delightful little book, *On Learning the English Tongue*, "If there is any activity of the teacher which has upon the child an influence more subtle and more enduring than this of story-telling, I do not know of it. For it does not seem to me untrue to say that the child's philosophical background is formed and painted by the stories in which he lives" (2, p. 101). And for story-telling only the

best will do. The best stories, he believes, are those which have withstood the onslaught of time—Jack and the Beanstalk, The Babes in the Woods, Cinderella, Snow White, Hansel and Gretel—these are the gates by which children may enter their heritage.

For older children there are Robin Hood, the Norse legends, Alfred and the Cakes, Bruce and the Spider, Canute and the Tide. These could be called the "trivialia" of history but they are a part of our mental heritage. This is the age at which children become aware of moral issues. It pleases them that right should triumph over wrong; they feel compassion for those who suffer and "begin to share with them the noble tragedy of being human." We can try to help children understand tragedy as it operates in modern Hungary and intrigue and power as they operate in Egypt and along the Suez Canal but that is of a different quality.

Reading aloud has a place in the everyday life of the school. It shares time and values with story-telling and gradually takes the place of story-telling as children grow older. Here again only the best is worth presenting. Beatrix Potter, *The Just So Stories*, the Grimms and Anderson, *The Hobbit*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *Tom Sawyer*, *Huckleberry Finn*, and later probably Dickens—are all worth the time it takes to read them aloud. There are modern books too, but often children will read these for themselves. Some of the books we read aloud to children are selected because they add value to the social studies program or because they help children to understand and appreciate others in their school community. *The Hundred Dresses* may serve this latter purpose, or

*The Moffats*, *Bright April*, or *Blue Willow*. Some are read for their humor and because children love their fantasy.

Poetry is important, too—and what is offered should be worthy of the name of poetry. Children will not instinctively choose the best because they hear too much cheapness and vulgarity in the radio and television commercials. And it need not be always of the "sweetness and light" variety. As children grow older, they can enter into feelings of pity, of courage and aspiration, and of quiet and calm sadness as well as into gaiety and liveliness.

About three years ago the historian, Henry Steele Commager, wrote an article for *Saturday Review* entitled, *When Majors Wrote for Minors*.<sup>\*</sup> In it he called attention to the many books of the past written for adults but appropriated by older children and held as their own—*Gulliver's Travels*, *Robinson Crusoe*, and some of Mark Twain, for example. He felt that we have a long and splendid tradition of writing for children but that it seems to have ended—that the line between juvenile and adult literature has become too sharp, that major writers are not addressing themselves to the young. Perhaps that is true, but when one looks at the constellation of stars writing for Landmark Books and notes the quality of the contributions made to children by Elizabeth Coatsworth, Stephen Meader, John Tunis, Armstrong Sperry, and many, many others it is hard to believe that we are providing our children with inferior material to feed their minds and imagination.

Most teachers clearly recognize that

<sup>\*</sup>Henry Steele Commager, "When Majors Wrote for Minors." *Saturday Review Reader* No. 2. New York: Bantam Books, 1953.

the reading of textbooks and readers alone will never make a reader of a child. He must have far more reading material than that and material that has greater personal appeal. Once a child is able to read with interest and understanding, a number of the educational writers in England would not have him undergo "reading lessons" any longer. They would, instead, surround him with suitable books and an environment which encourages him to adventure into them. But teachers must know books and be readers themselves, if they are to entice children into becoming readers. When an interest arises the teacher must be able to say, "There is a book about that. Here, let me read you a bit of it. There is more here that you can read for yourself." Or on a foggy day, "Do you know Sandburg's poem about the fog? Let me read it to you." There will be children in any group who will go on with the reading or take the poetry book and search for more material as enjoyable as that which the teacher has read.

Schools in this country are seeking constantly to expand and enlarge their libraries of children's books. In my visits to nearly forty schools in England last spring I found the same thing to be true. In new schools there are beautiful library rooms, and headmasters and mistresses shared with teachers and children the thrill of adding new books and finding ways to make the library more valuable to everyone in the school. In old and crowded buildings, the library might be housed in the hall, at the back of the playroom in cases covered with wire netting—anywhere—but always the visitor's attention was called to it and the way it was being used. It was interesting to note the number

of titles in each library that were from the United States.

The attitude of the teacher will determine how much use children make of their library. In one English school, a teacher occasionally plans a session of what the children call "tasters." He chooses half a dozen books and reads excerpts from each. This stimulus usually sends children to the bookshelves to find the books they have tasted or to search for others equally appealing.

Our children are reading and reading widely. The proof lies in the tremendous sales of children's books of all kinds and qualities. One has only to look at the reviews of children's books appearing in magazines and newspapers this month and read the figures presented from time to time by Nancy Larrick and others showing the amazing popularity of many of the good books for children, to be sure that our children are reading. Publishers would not publish books in such quantity nor periodicals give so much space to reviews if it were not profitable and important.

#### **Creative Experience through Reading**

In reality, reading does not begin with recognition and interpretation of printed symbols. A baby learns very early to read the expressions of his mother's face and the tones of her voice. He learns to read sounds, shapes, colors, sizes and to fit what he reads into related categories (3). He recognizes packages of food he likes at the supermarket and demands a nickel when he sees and hears the ice cream peddler coming down the street. Later, he reads pictures and tells himself a story from them. In school, he learns to find the bird, animal, or plant he wants to identify in the guide books and takes the book to the

teacher for her to read the page to him. Perhaps all of this should be labeled discovery rather than creativeness but the two are closely related.

Every teacher of little children knows how eagerly some of them come together for storytime—how their eyes sparkle when the third little pig outwits the bad wolf or with what satisfaction they picture Mother's appreciation of her red shoes and the loving labor of Snipp, Snapp, and Snurr in procuring them for her. Perhaps you have noted with what depths of feeling slightly older children hear that Little Brother's offering of Pedro's coin at the altar caused the long-silent bells of the great cathedral to chime forth. You see the children come awake again with a deep sigh as though they had almost stopped breathing. Or you hear sensitive eight-year-old Martha say tearfully, as she puts away *Heidi*, "I didn't want it to end!" Or you are aware that your tough and vocal eleven-year-old baseball players are silent and thoughtful as you lay aside *The Secret of the Andes* or finish reading of the expansion and exaltation of spirit which the talk of Samuel Adams and the others in the upper room brought to Johnny Tremain. The children have not been themselves as they listened. They have been transported out of and beyond themselves. They have been freed in time and space for a few moments and have grown in stature and maturity through the experience.

Creative thinking, we are told, involves the production of new ideas. These need not be ideas that no one else has ever thought. They are new to the thinker and arrived at by him. Whenever we put experiences or ideas into new combinations or patterns, creative thinking is taking

place. Creative thought may result in action or production of some sort but it need not. Creative thought, when it is of the artistic rather than the scientific variety, may be satisfying in itself and in the emotion it evokes.

Reading widely about a personal hobby or interest could be a creative experience for a child in that he is expanding and growing in knowledge and power as he reads. Digging out reference material to solve his own vital problems or feed his eager curiosity could also be called creative experience in a sense. The child is adding to himself and making his own integrations as he works.

Too often we teach children how to read but give little thought to teaching them what they might profitably read or for what ends to read. A reader, we know, is not a person who can read; he is a person who does read. Teachers need to help children understand and appreciate the fact that through reading they can stand on the shoulders of all of the thinkers and writers who have gone before them and reach upward from that height. Children need to think of reading as a means of expanding and growing through an endless variety of experiences. They need experience in school as well as outside which will help them think of reading as tension reducing experience and experience in reshaping emotion and outlook. Using reading for purposes of therapy needs to be handled cautiously yet all good teachers do some of it as they help children to find themselves.

The reading material we offer children is of many sorts. Some of it is ephemeral and serves only a passing need. Some of it calls for critical thinking and evaluation. The value of some of the material avail-

able for children lies mainly in satisfying aesthetic experience.

All reading demands of the reader that he select from his funds of concepts the appropriate meanings for the words he perceives, that he weave them together into the larger meanings indicated by the author's style of expression and arrangement of material, and that he create his own mental pictures and his own intellectual and emotional reaction. All reading is in reality, a type of problem-solving thinking and much of it is creative.

A number of people in this country and in England have arrived at similar conclusions regarding learning to read and reading. They are convinced that children should be given opportunity to grow into the reading of printed symbols as they grew into reading life about them through observing, listening, forming associations, and building concepts. Guidance and teaching should be individual and tailored to each child's needs. Once a child has "taken off," has reached the point at which he is able to read with understanding and enjoyment, he should be allowed to select his own reading material and follow his own interests in his reading. It does not mean that he needs no more help with expanding and refining his reading techniques—it means that he can be helped to improve his reading through reading material that is suited to his ability and his interests. A wide selection of books

is made available to him and he chooses the books he likes and in which he feels comfortable. The child reads because he wants to read, not under compulsion. The reading is not an end in itself; the ideas in the book and the child's interest and purpose become the compelling force that keeps him reading. And the more he reads the better he reads and the more he enjoys reading.

Reading furnishes both means and material for the child's task of building himself. Reading helps to make of him "a full man," as Bacon has said. The teacher is for the child the vessel of the wisdom of mankind. She opens windows on a wider world for him and leads him to archways through which he can look out as Tennyson suggested, on an untraveled world whose margin fades forever and forever as he moves. What a happy, seeking child learns is his forever while what an unhappy, anxious, discouraged, or driven child learns is soon lost.

Bell has said, "There are three crimes which shall not be forgiven us: A class of children singing without joy, a class of children dancing without laughter, and a class of children who, listening to poetry, are naked of delight." And we might add a fourth crime, a class of children who through reading find no personal fulfillment and see no new horizons beckoning them on.

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## Progress in Reading: A Special Review

It is always a pleasure to welcome a contribution to the scientific study of education from research workers in England. In their new booklet *Progress in Reading* (4) J. C. Daniels and H. Diack are following such of their compatriots as Burt, Schonell, Valentine, and Vernon, who have influenced thought and practice in reading instruction in the United States. After the inaccuracies and emotional appeals of last year's publication in this country, in a book entitled *Why Johnny Can't Read*, (5) it is a special pleasure to find an accurate and dispassionate attempt to get at the facts regarding phonics instruction. Daniels and Diack, of the Institute of Education, University of Nottingham, and the authors of the *Royal Road Readers* which I observed in use in a number of English schools in the spring of 1956, have made such a laudable attempt. Specific criticisms of some parts of their study which follow should not over-balance a general reaction of pleasure in reading such scientific work from England.

### Subjects and Procedures

*Progress in Reading* reports an investigation in which two main groups of children were taught by two methods of reading instruction for one year. These children were seven- and eight-year olds who had not learned to read in their infant schools (Mr. Flesch please note), and who were initially "totally illiterate" beginners in the junior school. Group A was taught in one class of 44 children (initially 51 pupils) by the "phonic word-method" as used in the *Royal Road Readers*. Group B consisted of 55 children in three sub-groups of 25, 20, and 10 children, the two smaller groups of which were taught as separate "definite groups of backward children." These three sub-groups were taught by a "mixed methods" approach which included some incidental phonics.

Results of the year's work were compared on four tests of word recognition and two of sentence reading. The scores on the test were supplemented by analyses of errors, made possible because all the tests were of oral reading recorded on tape and later reproduced in I.P.A. symbols as well as ordinary writing.

In such a study where methods are compared, the procedures used in each method are crucial, and the form of the tests may affect the results. The "mixed methods" are not reported in the bulletin in detail except to say that they contained some "incidental phonics." The methods used were described as using the "whole-word" approach followed by some analysis of known words and work on sounds of letters. According to the authors, the "phonic word-method" begins with words that are phonetically regular, avoids the sound of values of letters in isolation, and emphasizes reading for meaning. The "phonic word-method" seems to differ from other phonics systems largely in the fact that the child works originally with whole words, using both visual and auditory analysis and with considerable emphasis on meaning. In other words, the authors have not differentiated sharply between the two methods they are comparing.

The tests are more fully described. Three of them were based on words in the books used by the "mixed method" pupils and three upon the "phonic word-method" books—three used words that are "regularly phonic" and three include words which do not conform to simple phonic pronunciation rules. In appraising the study it should be recalled that these were all tests of oral reading. The types of error are analyzed in detail into seven categories such as phonetic errors (*dipped* for

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dipped), incorrect beginnings and endings, reversals and substitutions.

The authors believe that the test results obtained show a clear superiority in scores for the pupils taught by the "phonics word method" over pupils taught by "mixed methods" but find few differences in the types of errors made by each group, except that the "mixed methods" children had a larger percentage of "nil responses." On the four word tests the "phonics word method" pupils averaged 75 per cent correct answers, and the "mixed method" pupils averaged only 43 per cent correct—a low score for any achievement test involving specific words taught. A few criticisms of procedures and the interpretations of the results are made below.

### Some Criticisms

One writer has remarked that "a critic is a necessary evil, and criticism is an evil necessity." This should perhaps be truer of writing in educational publications than it often is today. The following suggestions are made about *Progress in Reading* in the spirit of the remark attributed to Elbert Hubbard, "To avoid criticism, do nothing, say nothing, be nothing." The authors of the booklet have done something so now they can be encouraged to go on to new investigations by reminding them of a few points such as the following:

(1) The coverage of the related research in *Progress in Reading* is inadequate. The authors criticize the studies of Gill and Burt in England which found that phonics methods were not so effective as other methods and then quote with approval an old study by Valentine and a recent one done in Queensland, Australia. They mention only four studies on phonics instruction done in the United States, those of Gates, Garrison and Heard, Tate and Agnew. On this important topic there are at least thirty worth-while studies in this country, many of which have been ably summarized by Betts, (1) Burrows, (2, 3) Witty, (8) and others. If research is quoted, some indication of

the total related volume of facts should be given.

(2) The title of the bulletin would be more accurate if it were *Progress in Word Recognition*. In their opening sections the authors speak of phonics and even "mixed methods" as ways of improving efficiency in word recognition or identification. Then they seem to slip gradually over into the point of view that this is the whole reading process. In the modern view, "phonics," "look say," the "kinaesthetic method" and other approaches are concerned with only one phase of reading. Total reading programs include work on comprehension, interpretation, and use of materials read. This is probably too much for one study, but the title should be exact.

(3) The authors argue themselves into a sort of either-or position as if the teaching of reading was "phonics" versus "whole" methods. Actually, the two methods reported do not seem far apart, and their own materials in the *Royal Road Readers* would seem to combine some of the two systems. Practice in the United States seldom relies on one exclusive method and reading procedures vary with different children, the materials used, and the teacher's specific goals. (7) There is no logical reason why a one-method attack on a problem is any stronger than a multi-pronged attack. Research in this country, such as the recent little study by Mills (5) and others published before *Progress in Reading*, shows that different children learn to recognize words more efficiently by different methods and that there is no "best" method of teaching reading for all children. Let us bend our efforts to finding out *which* methods are best for *which* children rather than setting up an artificial either-or situation.

(4) In regard to technical details, I question somewhat the sampling in the study. Not only are the groups small, but they are not compared in intelligence. They are all non-readers, but at seven years or so there are many reasons why a child may be a non-reader. The evidence

in regard to teacher ability and quality of schools is, of course, always hard to get, but there seemed to be considerable variation in the situations in which the sub-groups of Group B (the "mixed methods" group) were placed. Finally, of course, the results obtained on a small group of children who were non-readers after two years or so in school should not be generalized to the reading instruction of the larger school population.

(5) It is not a criticism but a severe limitation of the study that the children were tested by oral reading tests only. A number of studies in the United States have also shown a favorable influence of phonics on pupils' oral reading, but this has not always transferred to their more frequent silent reading.

(6) In the statistical analysis of the results the Critical Ratio is used to test the reliability of the differences on test scores of Groups A and B. Table X indicates that the distribution of these test scores is not a normal one and the authors state that "the histograms for Group B show definite bi-modality" (p. 29). In such circumstances there are some doubts about considering the children of Group B as a single group, especially since they were taught as three separate groups. The authors discuss some possible implications of the bi-modal results but do not indicate, for example, whether the high scores in Group B were associated with one sub-group, the more or the less intelligent children, etc. Perhaps some case studies or detailed classroom observations would throw light on the more subtle factors affecting children's reading progress.

(7) One final question. On page 32 the authors state that their "phonic word-method" plan "is one of a step-by-step advance by the whole class, with individual attention given to those who meet difficulties, to keep them in line." Have the authors been reading the

literature on individual differences? Most American teachers would attempt some grouping for instruction at this stage of reading progress. We might even say that, as long as the better pupils are challenged, "the better you teach them the farther you spread them apart." It might be interesting to check further to see if Group B, with a bigger final spread in reading ability (p. 32), had not been the better taught. Good teaching often increases differences.

These seven criticisms are offered in a spirit of co-operativeness and interest. The United States and England have both so many research needs in educational matters that any other attitude would be short-sighted. Daniels and Diack have reported carefully on a topic about which we need to know much more. I hope that they will pursue further studies in the ways children learn to read.

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# Language Arts Research, 1956

The following list of 289 studies in the language arts which were in progress or completed during 1956 was compiled for the National Conference on Research in English. This organization is active in stimulating and summarizing research in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Marion A. Anderson, N.C.R.E. president during 1956-57, and Ralph C. Staiger, chairman of the Research Bulletin Committee, were responsible for the compilation.

To obtain the information, four copies of a questionnaire were sent to 250 deans of graduate schools in the United States, requesting that the copies be distributed to interested faculty members. Copies were also sent to members of the N.C.R.E. Returns were received from 112 schools.

Some of the studies reported dealt with subjects of a highly specialized literary nature. Since this report could not undertake to present literary research with any degree of adequacy, literary studies were not included. A similar decision was reached when the research in speech correction and dramatics was considered.

Only studies completed in 1956, or reported in progress during the year are included. Periodical articles which report research in the language arts are not listed, for they can be found in other summaries. Research on the master's, doctoral, and post-doctoral level are listed alphabetically by author, in fourteen categories.

The National Conference on Research in English is not undertaking to evaluate the significance of these studies, but is merely reporting the research which is going on in the field. If this service proves useful to readers, the N.C.R.E. will plan to continue it in succeeding years.

*What to Do About Reading in the Secondary School: Answers from Research* is the current research bulletin of the organiza-

tion. It will be distributed by the National Council of Teachers of English in the fall. Edited by M. Agnella Gunn, 1957-58 president of the conference, the bulletin includes summaries by Angela Broening, Baltimore Public Schools, Margaret Early, Syracuse University, Helen Hanlon, Detroit Public Schools, and Constance McCullough, San Francisco State College. Information concerning the N.C.R.E. may be obtained from the secretary, Dr. Helen A. Murphy, School of Education, Boston University, Boston, Massachusetts.

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A grandmother of three is the new czar of the comic book industry. She is Mrs. Guy P. Trulock. She has been named comics code administrator for the comics publishers of America. Mrs. Trulock is a civic leader in New York City. Her job will be to see that the comic books maintain standards of decency.

# National Council of Teachers of English

## Councilletter

Greetings from Calcutta:

Almost immediately after the 1956 convention in St. Louis, I took off for a flight around the world. At this moment of writing I am just about half way around the globe, and my most vivid, recent memories abroad have been the pleasant hours spent with fellow American educators in Bangkok, Thailand, whence I came here—that land of happy, smiling people, working so valiantly with the help of America's ICA (International Cooperation Administration) to improve their educational program. As I strolled along the streets of Bangkok yesterday morning, before taking my plane for Calcutta, it was almost time for school, and I passed scores of children in their clean and trim uniforms, hurrying toward the iron gates opening out to them. Some came in those large-sized tricycles that line the streets of Bangkok, pedalled by sturdy brown legs in front, with a half dozen youngsters piled in the back. Some came on busses.

It was a pleasant sight to an erstwhile schoolmarm—this demonstration in a faraway land that even the least of these deserve to be educated up to their capacity.

Some miles away from the city I visited a teacher-training school in the company of a charming young Thai supervisor who had received some of her training in America. She had studied at the University of Michigan under Dr. Charles Fries; she knew Dr. Dora V. Smith and Dr. Helen K. Mackintosh, and was present at our 1953 NCTE convention in Los Angeles. What impressed me was not the program, not the building or equipment or materials—for these were very meager, indeed—but the serene and courageous spirit of my gallant

little escort, pitting her might against what at times, here in the Far East, seems to me almost insurmountable difficulties, and a surge of professional pride stirred within me as we drove back the thirty miles to town—past the rice fields, now golden in the afternoon light, for it was harvest time; past the languid water-buffalo, wallowing in the sloughs which lined the road; back to the crowded streets where one feels constantly the pressures of the "teeming millions."

Back home in the United States we are committed to the idea of education for *all* American children, and the task, we know, tests our strength to its limit. In Asia the complexities of that same problem—and education seems the only answer to world tension and strife—rise to what seems like astronomical proportions; yet bravely the teachers carry on.

It was my assignment for this Councilletter to write on the committee structure of the NCTE—that very essential organization of our time and effort and ideas which propels us forward—but aside from my wish to send greetings back home from this faraway land, I would like to stress the importance of just one committee activity which got underway at the St. Louis convention, an importance which has been highlighted by my travels.

Not until my visit to Bangkok did I sense fully the urgent need for teachers who can teach English as a second language, or for methods and materials that will help those who are seeking quickly to bring to those abroad, so eager to learn, the tremendous resources which are available to them in books written in English. There isn't time to translate all that we know about education into the native language—though that is important, too. Eng-

lish is fast becoming a universal language and the need for adequate teaching of that language abroad is crucial.

At St. Louis, the NCTE Committee in International Cooperation sponsored a session on the subject "How Can We Cooperate with Teachers of English in Foreign Lands?" Participating were teachers from Belgium, Thailand, and the United States; other teachers with experience in Italy, Germany, Australia, and other countries entered into the discussion. Over and over we heard, "We need books. We need better-prepared teachers. We need to correspond with American teachers, and we need to have our students correspond with American students." A speaker from the U. S. Information Agency told of the far-reaching program of his group, but said that it needs all possible cooperation from others. The National Council of Teachers of English is the world's largest and strongest organization of English teachers. What can it do to help appease the hunger for English that exists all around the world? The Committee on International Cooperation and the Committee on Teaching English as a Second Language are searching for some of the answers. They may call on you for help.

Sincerely,

Luella B. Cook  
Past president

### **Seventh Workshop Added to NCTE Sponsorship**

A one-week workshop, at Cornell University, has been added to the six previously announced, according to word from NCTE headquarters. These workshops are all co-sponsored by the Council, in co-operation with colleges and universities. The complete list is as follows:

Alabama College, August 5 to 23. Emphasis on oral and written communication. Leader, James Mason, Indian Springs School, Helena, Alabama, assisted by members of the Alabama College faculty. Three semester hours of graduate or undergraduate credit. Detailed informa-

tion from Professor M. L. Orr, Sr., Alabama College, Montevallo, Alabama.

Stanford University, July 15 to 19. Theme: "The Teaching of Critical Thinking in English Courses." Leader of this Fifth Annual Pacific Coast English Conference will be Professor Alfred Grommon of Stanford University, to whom questions may be addressed. Among the speakers will be Lou LaBrant, Virgil Whitaker, and Helen Schrader.

Purdue University, June 10 to 28. Areas for study: elementary linguistics, historical and structural grammar, usage, composition teaching, English curriculums. Three hours graduate credit. Visitors welcome. Visiting lecturers. Detailed information from Professor Russell Cosper, Department of English, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

Iowa State Teachers College, June 17 to 28. Emphasis on adolescent literature. Director, Mark Neville, with cooperation from ISTC faculty. Two semester hours of graduate or undergraduate credit. Detailed information from Professor John Cowley, Department of English, Iowa State Teachers College, Cedar Falls.

Cornell University, July 8 to 13. Consideration to reading, writing, linguistics, literature, supervision, curriculum. Led by Mrs. Milacent Ocvirk, with guest speakers and assistants. Two hours credit. Detailed information from Mrs. Milacent Ocvirk, 1805 Slaterville Road, Ithaca, New York.

North Texas State College, June 3 to July 12. Divided into two three-week sessions, the first emphasizing composition, the second, literature. Led by Professor E. G. Ballard, with J. N. Hook present for half of each three-week session. Credit for each session. Detailed information from Professor Ernest S. Clifton, Department of English, North Texas State College, Denton.

Marshall College, June 24 to July 12. Emphasis on teaching reading in junior and senior high schools. Led by Hardy R. Finch, chairman of the NCTE Secondary Section.

Three hours of graduate or undergraduate credit. Detailed information from Dean, Teachers College, Marshall College, Huntington, West Virginia.

Those planning to attend any of these seven workshops should notify as soon as possible the person named above.

### NCTE Election Notice

In accordance with the constitution of the National Council of Teachers of English, the Board of Directors at its meeting last Thanksgiving Day chose Richard S. Alm, Dwight L. Burton, John J. DeBoer, Ruth E. French, and Irvin C. Poley as members of a Nominating Committee to propose officers for 1958. Through Dwight Burton, the chairman, the committee offers these nominations:

For President: Brice Harris, Pennsylvania State University.

For First Vice-President: Joseph Mersand, Jamaica High School, New York City.

For Second Vice-President: Helen F. Olson, Seattle Public Schools.

For Directors-at-Large: Carolyn Bagby, Ponca City, Oklahoma, Senior High School; Margaret M. Bryant, Brooklyn College; Peter Donchian, Wayne State University; Ellen Frogner, University of Minnesota; Francis Shoemaker, Columbia University; Carrie Stegall, Holliday, Texas Public Schools.

This slate will be presented for action at the meeting of the Board next November. Other nomination (s) may be petition (s) signed by twenty Directors of the Council and presented to the Secretary of the Council, with the written consent of the nominee (s), before August 16. When Mr. Burton moves the election of the committee's nominees, other nominations may be made by members of the Board.

Specialists named by the National Council of Teachers of English acted as consultants for new editions of the American Library Association's widely used *Basic Books Collections*,

which are being published by A.L.A.

The three titles are: *A Basic Book Collection for Elementary Grades*, 6th ed. (October, 144 pages, \$2); *A Basic Book Collection for Junior High Schools*, 2nd ed. (December, 144 pages, \$2); and *A Basic Book Collection for High Schools*, 6th ed. (March, 204 pages, \$2.75).

Each book was prepared by a subcommittee of librarians appointed by the A.L.A. Editorial Committee from recommendations presented by the American Association of School Librarians, an A.L.A. Division. In addition to the consultants from NCTE, the following were represented: NEA Department of Classroom Teachers, Association for Childhood Education International, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, and the National Council for the Social Studies.

The many consultants involved in the project helped A.L.A. achieve a distribution of titles which, it was felt, best meets the demands of reading interest and curriculum enrichment. Acting for NCTE were: Agnes G. Gunderson and Muriel Crosby, for *A Basic Book Collection for Elementary Grades*; Gladys R. Skinner and Ruth A. Strozinsky, for *A Basic Book Collection for Junior High Schools*; and Loretta Scheerer and Richard S. Alm, for *A Basic Book Collection for High Schools*.

The Elementary and High School books were first published in 1922 and 1924, respectively, while the first edition of the Junior High School book appeared in 1950. Long recognized as authoritative buying guides for the basic books for school libraries, the A.L.A. *Basic Book Collections* are designed to fill the need of small and medium-sized schools which may not have the services of trained librarians and of teachers and librarians in schools of all sizes.

All titles were in print at the time they were included in the collections. The Elementary and Junior High collections include approximately 1,000 titles each, the High School



book about 1,500. Each title listed is briefly annotated as to content and reading level, where relevant, and the listings shows the author, publisher, copyright date, price, Dewey Decimal Classification number, subject headings for the library catalog, and the indication of available H. W. Wilson catalog cards; in addition, the High School titles show Library of Congress card numbers.

In addition to the classified books, each of the A.L.A. *Basic Book Collections* includes lists of recommended magazines prepared by the Magazine Evaluation Committee of the American Association of School Librarians. The High School book also includes "Selection Aids for Audio-Visual Materials."

In 1954, AASL conducted a survey to determine the extent to which the A.L.A. *Basic Book Collections* serve the purposes for which they were developed. It was found that they provide the basic list needed for first purchase for small libraries, and the magazine and audio-visual lists were noted as especially valuable. It was found that librarians also used the books to maintain a balanced collection in their libraries; to make reading lists; and as a guide in cataloging books. The survey emphasized the usefulness of the books for small libraries, and their particular helpfulness when the li-

brary was conducted by a person without special training.

The American Library Association has announced a special offer on the *Basic Book Collections* and *The Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin*, effective with the publication in March of *A Basic Book Collection for High Schools*. New subscribers to *The Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin* will be able to receive any one of the three new editions of the *Basic Book Collections* at a combined price that represents a total saving of \$4.25. *The Booklist and Subscription Books Bulletin*—a twice-monthly merger of two long established review magazines—is a natural complement to the *Basic Book Collections*, since it provides basically the same information for selective, classified lists of new books recommended for libraries. It includes reference books and sets and adult books in all categories, as well as books for children and young people. For a subscription with either the elementary or junior high *Basic Book Collection* the combined price will be \$6.75; the total price for the magazine and *A Basic Book Collection for High Schools* will be \$7.50. The combination may be ordered through any subscription agency or bookstore, or direct from the American Library Association, 50 East Huron Street, Chicago 11, Illinois.

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An estimated 4,202,000 children were born in the United States in 1956, according to the U. S. Public Health Service. This increase of almost 3% over 1955 is a result of a greater number of first children as well as of a rise in the size of families.

## Writing A Group Poem

The class had been reading and hearing about the Vikings or Norsemen as the earliest explorers. Our class sets of Social Studies Books, *The Story of Our Country* and *Stories of My Country's Beginnings* were consulted. In addition we used *Our America*, *The Building of America*, and *Founders of Our United States*, from our class library. The class has seen the strip-film, *The Vikings*, and pictures of Viking ships. They had given short group-planned dramatizations of episodes from the lives of Eric the Red and Leif Ericson. In art they had drawn or painted Viking ships and had designed shields and mastheads. The Viking voyages were traced on a large map, and small maps were drawn showing the routes from Norway to Iceland, to Greenland, to Finland. In mathematics they had computed the approximate number of years between the explorations of the Vikings, Marco Polo, and Columbus. They had also discussed the reasons for lack of authentic dates, i.e. no written or printed records. Instead they had "sagas."

I then asked the class for suggestions for an original assembly program. Because we had written a poem on the first day of the term and had been reading poems in choral recitation, the most popular suggestion was, "Let's write a poem and learn it as a choral recitation." A few themes were suggested, with "The Vikings" getting most approval.

We started by making an outline of

the points to be covered and then proceeded to do two stanzas a day. Suggestions for whole lines or phrases or individual words came from nearly every child. Dictionaries were consulted, the meter clapped out, lines read, changed, and reread. The stanzas were copied into notebooks. A chart of the whole poem was made.

The children read each stanza and decided on the choral arrangement. There were solos, duets, trios, quartets, quintets, sextets, boys' group, girls' group, and all of the class. By this time, most of the class knew the whole poem by heart and the rehearsals were for the purposes of clarity, proper emphasis, cuing, and interpretation.

Ten school days after the conception of the idea, the poem was presented to the fifth and sixth year assembly. Later a tape recording was made for the school files.

Curriculum areas involved were, history and geography, map study, spelling, reading, writing, dictionary practice, phonics, science and art.

Both the writing and presentation of the poem were very rewarding experiences to the children. They felt proud of the results and the compliments they received. Facts about the Vikings were firmly impressed on even the slowest learner in the class.

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Miss Lachman is a teacher in P.S. 33, New York City.

## Sources of Appeal in Kindergarten Books

First experiences with literature are important. Kindergarten teachers must understand children's reactions to stories. Why is one story appealing while another is not? A knowledge of the sources of appeal is a necessity in any appraisal of kindergarten children's reactions to story-books read by teachers.

This article presents the sources of appeal of over 2,500 kindergarten children in the schools of Contra Costa County, California. The data are obtained from an investigation, conducted by the writer, of reactions of kindergarten children to story-books read to them by their teachers.<sup>1</sup>

### Sources of Appeal

In order to determine the source of appeal for each story read, the teacher was asked to check the observable sources of appeal immediately after the story was initially read. The sources of appeal listed on the questionnaire were as follows: Illustrations, Story Content, Information Content, Humor, Surprise Element, and Refrain (jingle, verse, or the like, repeated several times). The teacher checked one item or more since a storybook might have more than one source of appeal.

The information obtained is presented

<sup>1</sup>Dante Cappa, *Reactions of Kindergarten Children to Story Books Read by Teachers*, (unpublished Doctor's dissertation, The University of California, Berkeley, 1953).

in Table I. Of 8,590 returns regarding the books, illustrations as a source of appeal had the highest frequency, 2,931 (34.1 per cent). Story content was second with 2,631 (30.6 per cent); information content, third with 1,000 (11.7 per cent); humor, fourth with 999 (11.6 per cent); surprise element, fifth with 797 (9.3 per

TABLE I  
DISTRIBUTION OF SOURCES OF APPEAL

SOURCE OF APPEAL	NUMBER	PER CENT
Illustrations	2,931	34.1
Story Content	2,631	30.6
Information Content	1,000	11.7
Humor	999	11.6
Surprise Element	797	9.3
Refrain	232	2.7
Total	8,590	100.0

cent); and refrain, sixth with 232 (2.7 per cent).

Within the limitations of possible sources of appeal of each book, the returns on 341 books indicate that illustrations constitute the chief source of appeal, closely followed by story content. Information content and humor are about equal as sources of appeal but far below the first two. Refrain falls below surprise element and was reported in less than 3 per cent of the returns.

Dr. Cappa is visiting Associate Professor of Education at the University of California, Berkeley.

# Windows on the World

## The Popular Arts in the Classroom

Edited by PATRICK D. HAZARD



Patrick D. Hazard

### Stereotypes in Science

by DON HERBERT, "Mr. Wizard."

The scientist—the man endlessly tracking his way down the labyrinths of knowledge—has always been with us and, in one way or another, he has always been suspect.

Very likely when some caveman rubbed the first two sticks together and produced fire, his fellow-cavemen chased him out of the community for acting strangely. The history of science and scientists through the ages has revolved around a three-step pattern—discovery, ridicule, vindication.

Even today, in America where scientific research has reached new pinnacles, the old science stereotypes remain.

They usually fall into three basic generalizations. They're all widely inaccurate, but they're widespread.

1. The Frankenstein. Call him "the mad scientist" if you will. He's usually bearded, unkempt, distraught of eye and specializes in dreaming up engines of destruction—the more destructive the better. In the public mind, the realization that scientists developed nuclear weapons has obscured the fact that atomic researchers have also produced weapons for destroying illness and disease and discovered new and important areas of knowledge.

2. The goofball. How many absent-minded idiots have you seen on stage and screen and in comic strips representing scientists? They putter and mumble, forget their right names and generally behave as though bereft of sense if not sanity. The best you can say for this stereotype is that they're goodnatured.

3. The egghead. This mythical scientist lives in an ivory tower. He's out of touch with reality and the common herd. Like some super-cerebral snob, he never deigns to mix with

humanity. Frosty and aloof, he is associated in the public mind with "the great brain" complex. You respect him for what he does in some abstruse way, but you resent him.

The truth of the matter is that scientists are human beings just like everyone else. Most scientists are reasonably complex beings with wives and families, bills on the first of the month, and an elemental desire to stay alive, in a steadily shifting world.

Take three currently famous scientific names—Jonas Salk, Charles Kettering, Albert Einstein. Mild-mannered, thoughtful, eminently rational and reasonable people, they contributed so much to help humanity that their names will be forever memorable.

In my "Watch Mr. Wizard" television show every week, I have tried in my own way to destroy these stereotypes. There are no mysterious beakers bubbling with weird concoctions on "Mr. Wizard." We try not to use the apparatus generally associated with laboratories. We use chewing-gum wrappers in explaining static electricity; we make moth balls dance to show an effect of carbon dioxide; we use a potato plunger to demonstrate air pressure.

There are generally enough clothes pins, mousetraps, milk bottles, horseshoes and candles around to demonstrate almost any aspect of science.

In doing research for "Mr. Wizard" and for the Progress Reports on General Electric Theatre, I have met and worked with hundreds of scientists and technicians. I have found them pleasant and helpful—sound of mind and body, with all the varying temperaments and

Mr. Hazard is Assistant Professor of English at Trenton State Teachers College, Trenton, New Jersey.



dispositions you would find in any successful group of men.

In other words, the scientist in reality is no Frankenstein, goofball or egghead. He's a man—just like other men—working hard at his job. The most important difference between his work and others is—our future is in his hands. He deserves our thanks and respect.

Editorial comment: Elementary school teachers have special reasons for heeding Don Herbert's words: He prepared himself for science education at a Wisconsin teachers' college. His special knack for presenting science to children should give us good reasons for supporting closed circuit TV. Few of us would presume to have Herbert's flair; none of us feel that using his weekly TV programs would in any way jeopardize our own jobs. Programs such as his simply add new dimensions to the curriculum. For a brilliant photoessay on TV teaching see *Life* (February 25, 1957); Dr. Alexander J. Stoddard gives a reasoned defense of TV teaching in a free pamphlet, *Schools For Tomorrow* (The Fund for the Advancement of Education, 655 Madison Avenue, N. Y. 21). Teachers are reminded that the weekly topics of "Mr. Wizard" (Saturdays, NBC-TV, 12:30 p.m.) are listed in my column, "Listenables and Lookables," in *Scholastic Teacher*.

Because of the importance of the topic and the wealth of new material, next month's department will also be devoted to the topic of science and the schools.

### Bibliography

The following list of books has been compiled by Patricia H. Allen, Librarian of *Science World*, and Lavinia Dobler, Librarian of *Scholastic Magazines, Inc.*

*I Know a Magic House*. By Julius Schwartz. Illustrated by Marc Simont. Whittlesey House. 1956. \$2.00. This elementary science book introduces the boy and girl to the world of science in the home—water coming into the house, the spinning of a wheel. The search for more magic will go on after the book is put aside. For younger children.

*Fun With Chemistry, Fun With Figures, Fun With Science*. By Mae Blacker Freeman and Irma M. Freeman. 1956. Random House. Each \$1.50. These three big books have simple experiments and many photographs. For younger children.

*The Magic of Water*. By G. Warren Schloat. Scribner. 1955. \$2.50. Like the author's other book, *Your Wonderful Teeth*, published by Scribner in 1954, this new book on water is filled with facts, photographs, diagrams and things to do. For younger children.

*What's Inside of Animals? What's Inside of Engines? What's Inside of Me? What's Inside Plants?* By Herbert S. Zim. Morrow. \$1.75 each. The elementary mysteries of basic botany, biology and physics are well explained. Clear illustrations. For younger boys and girls.

*Let's Look Inside Your House*, 1946; *Let's Look Under the City*, 1954; *Let's Find Out About Electricity*, 1956. By Herman and Nina Schneider. Grosset. \$2.95. Elementary science and how its principles are put to work for us. For younger children.

*Experiments With Atomics*, 1954; *Experiments in Chemistry*, 1952; *Experiments in Optical Illusion*, 1951. Crowell. Each \$2.50. By Nelson F. Beeler and Franklin M. Branley. Experiments for individuals or class. For middle grades.

*The Boy Scientist*. By John Lewellen. Simon & Schuster. 1956. \$3.95. Fundamentals of science explained in the stories of those who made its great discoveries. Simple experiments are included. For middle grades.

*The Wonderful World of Mathematics*. By Lancelot Hogben. Illustrated by Andre. Garden City. 1955. \$2.95. A story of mathematics from its very beginnings. Well told and colorfully illustrated. Even adults may enjoy this book. For middle grades.

*Animal Tools*, 1951; *Animal Sounds*, 1948; *Animal Weapons*, 1949. By George F. Mason. Morrow. Each \$2.25. Short, simple and factual with many pictures. Other titles included in the series. For middle grades.

*Wonder World of Microbes*. By Madeleine P. Grant. Whittlesey House. 1956. \$2.75. The story of helpful and harmful organisms and their importance to the world. It includes the discoveries of scientists past and present, including Dr. Salk's vaccine. Good, clear illustrations. For junior high.

*How To Make and Use a Telescope*. By H. Percy Wilkins and Patrick Moore. W. W. Norton. 1956. \$2.95. Step-by-step construction for the amateur. For junior high.



*Our Friend the Atom.* By Heinz Haber. Simon & Schuster. 1957. \$4.95. Using the historical approach, Haber tells the atomic story from Democritus to the present time. Beautiful illustrations by the Walt Disney studio make this not only colorful but simple to understand. Intended for young readers but a graphic presentation of a difficult subject for readers of all ages.

*The World We Live In.* By Life Magazine and Lincoln Barnett. Simon & Schuster. 1956. \$4.95. Adapted for young readers, this version of the Life Magazine picture story

is as beautifully illustrated and enjoyable as its parent edition. For junior high and also the middle grades.

*The Exploration of Mars.* By Willy Ley and Wernher Von Braun. Viking. 1956. \$4.95. An excellent factual history of the study of Mars in easily readable style. The latter half of the book is devoted to space travel and man's approaching journey to Mars. Its many photographs, drawings and tables are a valuable part of the text. Will have special appeal to the potential scientist.

### POETRY CALENDARS

The British people love poetry and also love their land, so that they often put together literary calendars with scenes illustrated by bits of poems.

Even the smallest child can make poetry calendars with pictures he likes pasted above a stanza or two of a favorite poem. The Travelers Insurance Company issues the beautiful Currier and Ives calendars which are suggestive of many familiar poems. "The Snow Storm," "Home for Thanksgiving," "Early Spring," "The Old Farm" go with the older American poets. Pictures from the *Ford Times* magazine are colorful. This little magazine, not for sale but distributed free, comes from Ford Motor Company, Dearborn, Michigan. John Hancock advertisements are good for patriotic poems.

Poetry, "that magic light that springs from the deep heart of things," on a cal-

endar will brighten a classroom or a boy's or girl's bedroom or make a gift for grandmother or a children's hospital. Stephen and Rosemary Benet's poem "Clipper Ships and Captains," found in their *Book of Americans*, would go with a Currier and Ives clipper ship. Several snow poems in May Hill Arbuthnot's *Time for Poetry* would go with snow scenes. And pictures of people could go with some of the people in *Gaily We Parade*, selected by John E. Brewston, or pictures of animals would go with Brewston's *Under the Tent of the Sky*. A Santa Fé Railway calendar could have "Navajo Prayer" found in *Poems for Red Letter Days*. And many New England poems could be illustrated by the pictures in *New England Journeys* which is available free from Dept. F, Back Bay, Box 151, Boston, Massachusetts.

LOUISE HOVDE MORTENSEN

# The Educational Scene

Edited by WILLIAM A. JENKINS<sup>1</sup>



William A. Jenkins

## School bell's knell

Along with thousands of mothers, we mourn the closing of NBC's "Ding Dong School." The bell rang for the last time several months ago, the television doors closed, and the teacher took her materials with her in hope of setting up class elsewhere, possibly ABC. We mourn the passing of the most successful television program for pre-school agers—NBC's only daytime program for children—and one based on modern child psychology. Perhaps the mothers miss the most constructive baby sitter the electronic cabinet has given them. Adding the dropping of "Ding Dong School" to the dropping some months earlier by NBC Radio of "Weekday," the thought-provoking program for the housewife, we come up with a disturbing sum—the resurgence of *commercial* in "commercial broadcasting." "Weekday" was replaced by a nauseous popular music program. "Ding Dong School" was replaced by a segment of "Home," the woman's magazine-type program, a bit more constructive than the other replacement.

If there was one, perhaps we missed the formal explanation offered by NBC of its action. Our information came indirectly via Robert Lewis Shayon's article in *Saturday Review* for February 9. At any rate, we are puzzled. "Ding Dong School" was a money-maker, though a low-budget program. Last year its profits were over half a million dollars. And it was a popular program, having once beaten Arthur Godfrey in the ratings. Its ratings had dropped from a high of nine, but so have ratings for most morning programs. NBC claimed it had dropped to two, but Dr. Horwich (Miss Frances) said that they were from four to seven, comparing favorably with her competitors. Letters protesting the dropping

were voluminous, too, but here again figures disagree. NBC said it received 11,000 letters addressed to the network or its officials. Dr. Horwich says she received 85,000 letters.

Mr. Shayon felt that Miss Frances had sponsor trouble. She began the year with seven, and lost five between April and September. She turned down a number of others whose products didn't live up to her standards. According to Shayon, seven hundred manufacturers approached her with merchandizing offers, but she accepted only thirty whose products were inexpensive items that children could enjoy and use again and again.

Even if "Ding Dong School" did not make a cent it was a valuable property. The prestige alone that it gave NBC should have been worth thousands. It seldom failed to make any list of "worth-while programs." It received commendations from the moppets themselves. It was a program that the networks themselves could point to when the howls about the tripe and trash occupying most of the air time got under their skins.

Well, "Ding Dong School" is off, but we hope only temporarily. In leaving, the schoolmarm took the program with her, and her mailbox (Box 396, New York 19). Mothers in 113 cities yearn, and some write. Teachers can, and perhaps should, write too, for Miss Frances readied many a child for school. Dr. Horwich also left NBC as children's program advisor.

## Johnny's reading

Liberal doses of Ogden Nash, among others, will help children to learn to like poetry. This

<sup>1</sup>Mr. Jenkins is Associate Professor of English and Elementary Education, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

thought was expressed by Dwight Burton at a U. S. Office of Education-sponsored conference to improve junior high school reading habits. Professor Burton said that appreciation of good reading material must be built from "the most popular entertainment." He added: "Superior modern fiction is preferable to venerable but mediocre classics. The classics of old, which have been visited upon generations of 9th graders, were once breathtaking. Today, they represent pallid excitement to youngsters who have been exposed to the space fiction of modern writers."

Professor Paul Witte counselled against introducing authors such as Dickens and Shakespeare to students too young to appreciate them. He said, "The language and customs of the old classical writers are quite baffling to modern youth."

The conference of reading and literature experts concluded that the only thing wrong with Johnny's reading habits is the reading matter given him.

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*The Truth About Your Child's Reading*, by Sam Duker and Thomas Nally (Crown, 181 pp., \$3), is probably the most complete answer to Mr. Flesch's charges of several years ago. In a thoroughly documented book they show, among other things, that phonics never left the classroom, that it merely teamed up with sight reading in modern teaching. They also show that reading is a problem not just in this country but in most parts of the world, and that it has been recognized as that for more than a century and a half. Universal education has emphasized the problem. The authors also invite *constructive criticism* of today's reading programs.

### Carnival of Books

"Carnival of Books," Ruth Harshaw's transcribed radio program on children's books, which is heard over WMAQ-NBC Chicago every Saturday, and via tape in other areas at other times, will complete its series on chil-

dren's authors of other lands this month. Featured authors will be from Germany.

The "Carnival of Books" fifteen-minute programs present a dramatized excerpt from each book, and then children who have read and enjoyed the books talk with the author and Mrs. Harshaw about them. Last summer Mrs. Harshaw made a trip to Europe to present authors of children's books from England, Scandinavia, France, and Germany. She has recorded some of her experiences in an article in the February ALA *Bulletin*.

Tapes of "Carnival of Books" programs may be obtained either for use off the air or for rebroadcast, for sale at \$8 each or for rental at \$5. Address "Carnival of Books," WMAQ, Merchandise Mart, Chicago 54.

These are the programs which will be presented in April:

April 6: *Big Tiger and Christian* by Fritz Muhlenweg (Pantheon).

April 13: *Emil and the Detectives* by Erich Kastner (Doubleday).

April 20: *Caves of the Great Hunters* by Hans Baumann (Pantheon).

April 27: *Jonah, the Fisherman* by Reiner Zimnik (Pantheon).

### New Picture Parade titles

Weston Woods Studios, Westport, Connecticut, has announced the release of five new titles in their Picture Parade series. Well known children's books adapted for current release include *Mike Mulligan and His Steamshovel* by Virginia Lee Burton (Houghton); *Georgie* by Robert Bright (Doubleday); *The Little Red Lighthouse* by Swift, with illustrations by Lynd Ward (Harcourt); *Jenny's Birthday* by Esther Averill (Harper); *The Circus Baby* by Maud and Miska Petersham (Macmillan). Films run five to ten minutes and are available for sale or rent in both color and B&W.

### Edison Foundation Awards

Three children's books received National Mass Media Awards for 1956-57, granted by the Thomas Alva Edison Foundation, Inc.: "The

Best Children's Science Book" (for younger children):

*Exploring the Universe* by Roy A. Gallant, illustrated by Lowell Hess (Garden City Books).

"For Special Excellence in Contribution to the Character Development of Children" (for younger children):

*Mr. Justice Homes* by Clara Ingram Judson, illustrated by Robert Todd (Follett).

"For Special Excellence in Portraying America's Past" (for boys and girls of high school age):

*The Story of the "Old Colony" of New Plymouth* by Samuel Eliot Morison, illustrated by Charles H. Overly (Knopf).

#### Other awards

*The Little Bookroom* by Eleanor Farjeon, illustrated by Edward Ardizzone (Oxford) has been awarded the Hans Christian Andersen Medal, the first and only international children's book Award. The award, set up at the Geneva Congress last year, was given by the International Board on Books for Young People. *The Little Bookroom* also received the Carnegie Medal, given by the Library Association in England, as "the outstanding children's book of the year." The same Association has just set up a Greenaway Award, to be made annually to the best British children's picture book.

*Glooskap's Country*, a collection of Canadian-Indian tales for children by Cyrus MacMillan (Oxford), has been awarded the "Book of the Year" Medal by the Canadian Association of Children's Librarians.

*The Happy Lion* by Louise Fatio and Roger Duvoisin (Whittlesey) has won the German Juvenile Book Prize.

The Secondary Education Board (national association of independent schools) announced its awards, on March 1, to the following as the ten best adult books of 1956 for the pre-college reader:

*A Single Pebble* by John Hersey (Knopf).  
*Profiles in Courage* by John F. Kennedy

(Harper).

*The Nun's Story* by Katharyn Hulme (Little).

*High, Wide and Lonesome* by Hal Borland (Lippincott).

*At Home in India* by Cynthia Bowles (Harcourt).

*My Lord, What a Morning* by Marian Anderson (Viking).

*This Hallowed Ground* by Bruce Catton (Doubleday).

*Winter Quarters* by Alfred Duggan (Coward-McCann).

*H.M.S. Ulysses* by Alistair MacLean (Doubleday).

*Helen Keller, Sketch for a Portrait* by Van Wyck Brooks (Dutton).

The announcement was made and the awards presented to the winning authors and publishers during the 31st annual conference of the Secondary Education Board. The books were selected by the Board's Senior Booklist Committee. The Secondary Education Board has made these awards annually since 1954.

#### Children's Book Week

"Explore With Books" will be the slogan for the thirty-eighth children's book week, to be celebrated this year November 17-23. The winning slogan was submitted by Mrs. Suzan Huff, a student majoring in elementary education at the University of Georgia.

The 1957 Newbery-Caldecott bookmarks, with new reproductions of the medals and lists of the winners for 1956 and all previous years are available from the Children's Book Council. The bookmarks, 9½ by 2½, are imprinted in black on light blue or salmon stiff coated paper. Price is 100 for \$1. Send requests to Children's Book Council, 50 West 53rd Street, New York 19.

#### Workshops

The Marshall College Reading Workshop will be held from June 24 to July 14. Practical techniques in the teaching of reading to junior and senior high school students will be demonstrated and discussed. Co-sponsor of the workshop this year is the National Council of

Teachers of English. Workshop director will be Hardy R. Finch, English chairman, Greenwich, Conn., High School, author, and book editor. Three points graduate or undergraduate credit. For details, write to D. Banks Wilburn, Dean, Marshall College, Huntington, West Virginia.

A Workshop in Reading, sponsored by the Department of Education, University of Chicago, will be held July 1-26. The theme will be "Materials for Reading." The Twentieth Annual Conference on Reading will be held concurrently, July 1-3.

A Workshop in Language Arts, sponsored by the Department of Education, University of Chicago, will be held July 29-August 16. For information on either of the workshops or on the reading conference, write to Department of Education, University of Chicago, 5825 Kimbark Avenue, Chicago 37.

The second of three annual workshops on the Evaluation of Library Materials for Children will be sponsored by the Graduate Library School of the University of Chicago, July 31-August 2. The 1957 Workshop will deal with library materials in the language arts, and will cover audio-visual materials and their use, as well as the materials of print. For further information, write to the Graduate Library School, University of Chicago, Chicago 37.

### The book clubs

The February selection of the Weekly Reader Children's Book Club was *No Children, No Pets* by Marion Holland (Knopf). Bonus selections for new members are *Book of Heroes* and *The Highly Trained Dogs of Professor Petri*. Weekly Reader Children's Book Club, Education Center, Columbus 16, Ohio. Memberships cost \$5 for six books a year.

The Teen Age Book Club, now with more than a million members, offered these selections in February:

*Red Carpet for Mamie Eisenhower* by Alden Hatch (Popular Library).

*Red Fox* by Charles C. D. Roberts (Teen Age Book Club).

*Blue Treasure* by Helen Girvan (Teen Age Book Club).

*Your Own Book of Funny Stories* (Pocket Jr.).

*Nurse Fairchild's Decision* by Zillah K. Macdonald (Bantam Books).

*Mountain Pony and the Pinto Colt* by Henry V. Larom (Teen Age Book Club).

*The New Exploits of Sherlock Holmes* by Doyle and Carr (Ace).

*Rimrock* by Luke Short (Bantam Books).

*Our Friend the Atom* by Heinz Haber (Dell).

*The Perma Quiz Book* by Joseph Nathan Kane (Permabooks).

*The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky* by Stephen Crane (Avon).

*The Thorndike Barnhart Handy Dictionary* (Bantam Books).

*The Count of Monte Cristo* by Alexandre Dumas (Bantam).

*The Silent World* by Captain J. Y. Cousteau (Pocket Books).

*Listen! The Wind* by Anne Morrow Lindbergh (Dell).

*Science Fiction Omnibus* by Groff Conklin, Ed. (Berkeley).

These bonus selections are available:

*Play It Yourself* by Bassett and Monath (Permabooks).

*Captain of the Ice* by Charles Spain Verral (Teen Age Book Club).

*Sweetie Pie* by Nadine Seltzer (Berkeley).

*Handbook of Beauty* by Constance Hart (Dell).

*General Billy Mitchell* by Roger Burlingame (New American Library).

*New Book of Dogs* by Carlton Brown (Maco).

*The Day Lincoln Was Shot* by Jim Bishop (Bantam).

*Magic Up Your Sleeve* by Patricia Lauber (Teen Age Book Club).

*Broken Wagon* by Norman A. Fox (Baltantine).

*For Laughing Out Loud* by Herman L. Masin (Teen Age Book Club).

These are the Junior Literary Guild selections for April:

For boys and girls 5 and 6 years old:

*Whistle for the Train* by Golden MacDonald. Doubleday, 2.50.



For boys and girls 7 and 8 years old:

*Third Monkey* by Ann Nolan Clark. Viking Press, \$2.50.

For boys and girls 9, 10, and 11 years old:

*Black Fox of Lorne*, written and illustrated by Marguerite de Angeli.

For girls 12 to 16 years old:

*Is This My Love* by Gertrude E. Finney. Longmans, Green, \$3.

For boys 12 to 16 years old:

*Sidi, Boy of the Desert* by Alida Malkus. Winston, \$2.75. Junior Literary Guild, Garden City, New York.

### Some useful materials

*The School Bell*, a new 12-page bimonthly magazine published by the National School Public Relations Association and the Division of Press and Radio Relations of the National Education Association, condenses recent major articles on education from national magazines "to take many of these fine things which are being said and written and broadcast about today's schools, and to channel them on a regular basis, to the point where all action must originate—with the local citizen in his community." Copies may be ordered from NSPRA, NEA, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W. Washington 6, D. C. Price 20 cents.

*Educational Television for Your Community*, a brochure designed to help interested persons become better informed about educational television and its tremendous potential. Copies can be obtained by writing to the Educational Television and Radio Center, Ann Arbor, Michigan.

*Book Collections of Royalty-Free Plays and Program Material*, 1957 catalog, contains a wealth of all grades and occasions. Write to Plays, Inc., 8 Arlington Street, Boston 16, Mass.

*High Interest—Low Vocabulary Materials*, is a selected booklist, annotated by subjects and grades, compiled by Helen B. Sullivan and Lorraine E. Tolman. Write to Journal of Education, Boston University School of Education, 332 Bay State Road, Boston, Mass. Also avail-

able from the same source: "Methods of Developing the Speaking Voice in the Elementary School," by Wilbert L. Pronovost; "Forecasting Juvenile Delinquency," by William C. Kvaraceus; "Classroom Enrichment Through Pupil Specialties," by Donald D. Durrell and Leonard J. Savignana; "Adjusting to Individual Differences in High School English," by Olive S. Niles and Margaret J. Early. All publications \$1 each.

*Teachers of Children Who Are Blind*, Bulletin 1955, No. 10, U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare, is one in a series of studies on the qualifications and preparation of teachers of exceptional children. Order from Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25. Price 40 cents.

*Driver Education Research*, and *Research Needs in Traffic Safety Education* both were published by the National Commission on Safety Education, NEA. The first analyzes driver education research in colleges throughout the country, and the second discusses areas of needs as indicated by a questionnaire study. Write to the Commission, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington 6, D. C. Prices are 75 and 50 cents respectively.

*American Heritage*, the excellent semi-monthly magazine-book, for February, is as usual a gold mine with nuggets of information on every page. Articles include "War Makes Thieves, Peace Hangs Them," by Roger Burlingame, a look at our pirate legends; "The Needless War With Spain," by William E. Leuchtenburg, a study of the personalities and events involved in a war in which Mr. Leuchtenburg says no vital American interest was involved; and "The Man Who Killed Custer," by Stanley Vestal, a unique record of an interview with the Sioux Indian Chief, White Bull, with drawings of the battle made by the chief himself. *American Heritage*, 551 Fifth Avenue, New York 17. \$2.96 per issue; \$12 per yearly subscription of six issues.

ADVANCE PROGRAM OF 1957 CONFERENCE

International Reading Association

May 10-11, Hotel New Yorker, New York City

Theme: READING IN ACTION

Friday, May 10, General Session, Manhattan Center. 9:30-11:30 a.m.

Greetings, William Jansen, Superintendent of Schools, New York City.

"Reading in the Present Communications Revolution." Lester Asheim, Dean, Graduate School of Library Science, University of Chicago.

"Reading, Thinking and Learning." Irving Lorge, Teachers College, Columbia University.

DEVELOPING ONGOING INTEREST IN READING

Friday p.m. 2:00 to 4:00.

*In the Primary Grades* (C. B. Routley, Chairman).

Through Stories and Poetry—Leland Jacobs.

Through Pupil-Prepared Materials—Althea Beery.

*Discussants:* Mary Elizabeth Bell, Kettering, O.

Jane Hobson, New Jersey State Dept. of Education.

*In the Intermediate Grades* (Helen Huus, Chairman).

What We Know About Children's Reading Interests—Herbert Rudman, Michigan State Univ., East Lansing.

Using Interest in Science as a Springboard to Further Reading—Glenn Blough.

*Discussants:* Helen Perdue, Dundalk, Md.

Beatrice Hurley, New York University.

*In Junior High School* (Nancy Young, Chairman).

The Changing Interests of Junior High School Students—John J. DeBoer.

Developing a Reading Program That Will Meet These Interests—Dwight Burton.

*Discussants:* Joseph C. Gainsburg, New York City.

Helen Stiles, Gouverneur, N. Y.

*In Senior High School* (Betty Simpson, Chairman).

Mass Media and the Reading Interests of High School Youth—Charles G. Spiegler.

Locating and Introducing High-Interest Reading Materials.

Olive Niles, Springfield, Mass.

Helen Bennett, Harrison, N. Y.

*From Kindergarten through High School* (for Administrators and Supervisors)

LaVerne Strong, Chairman.

How to Encourage Continuity of Interest Development Throughout a School System—Leonard Savignano.

Providing for School-wide Selection, Organization and Use of High-Interest Reading Materials.

The Reading Specialist's Job—Russell Diener, Kent, O.

The School Librarian's Job—Lillian Batchelor, Philadelphia.

The Supervisor's Job—Edna Horrocks, Cleveland.

*In College* (Marvin Glock, Chairman).

Developing Continuing Interest in Extensive Reading—Martha Gesling Weber, Bowling Green, O.

Capitalizing on TV and Movie Interests—Pat Hazard, Trenton, N. J.

*Discussants:* Sam Weingarten, Chicago.

*In the Remedial Program* (Helen Robinson, Chairman).

The Place of Interests in Remedial Work—Jack Lichtenstein, Cleveland Heights.

Locating, Introducing and Using Easy-to-Read, High-Interest Reading Matter—Jean Chall, N. Y.

*Discussants:* Viola T. Mays, Indianapolis.

George Bond, New Paltz, New York.

*Through Research* (George Spache, Chairman).

Research Study: "Effects of Introducing an Individualized Reading Approach by Student Teachers"—Sam Duker, Brooklyn College.

*Discussants:* Harvey Alpert, Hofstra College, Hempstead, N. Y.

Norman Bryant, Perceptual Development Laboratories, St. Louis.

*Gifted Children and Reading* (Chairman).

Identifying the Gifted—T. W. Martin, Toronto.

Challenging the Interests and Capacities of the Gifted—Paul Witty.

*Discussants:* Florence Brumbaugh, New York City.

Jack Kough, Chicago.

*Evaluating and Selecting Books for Children's Interests*

Evaluating Children's Books—May Hill Arbuthnot.

Recent Trends in Children's Reading Choices.

Iris Vinton, Director of Reading Program, Boys Clubs of America.

William D. Boutwell, Director of Teen-Age Book Club.

Claudia Lewis, Bank Street College of Education.

**BUILDING MORE EFFECTIVE READING SKILLS**

Saturday a.m. 9:30 to 11:30.

*In the Primary Grades* (C. B. Routley, Chairman).

Uses and Abuses of the Readiness Concept—Selma Herr, Los Angeles.

Laying the Foundations for Word Recognition—William S. Gray, Chicago.

Laying the Foundations for Meaningful Reading—Margaret McKim, Cincinnati.

*In the Intermediate Grades* (Helen Huus, Chairman).

How the Classroom Teacher Can Locate a Child's Underdeveloped Skills—R. Stauffer, University of Delaware.

Organizing the Class for Effective Development of Basic Skills—Mary Austin, Harvard University.

Ways and Means of Developing Basic Skills—Josephine Wolfe, Gary, Ind.

*In the Junior High School* (Nancy Young, Chairman).

Reading Needs of Junior High School Students—Nila B. Smith, NYU.

Procedures to Implement These Needs—A. S. Artley, University of Missouri.

Materials to Implement These Needs—Marion Anderson, Ginn and Co., Boston.

*In the Senior High School* (Betty Simpson, Chairman).

Building Reading Skills in High School—Given Horsman, Detroit.

Enlisting Faculty-wide Cooperation for Improvement of Reading Skills in High School—Marshall Covert, Highland Park, Ill.

*Discussants:* Walter G. Patterson, Needham, Mass.

Margaret Early, Syracuse University.

*From Kindergarten through High School* (For Administrators and Supervisors)

LaVerne Strong, Chairman.

How Can We Maintain Continuity in the Teaching of Skills—Donald Durrell, Boston.

The New York Plan—William Bristow.

The Detroit Plan—Gertrude Whipple.

*Discussants:* John Van Loon, Hamilton, Ontario.

Belma Meeker, Dallas, Texas.

*In College* (Marvin Glock, Chairman).

Meeting the Needs of College Students for Help in the Basic Skills—Phillip Shaw.

How Can We Help Students Develop Critical Reading of Textbooks and Resource Materials?—Agatha Townsend.

*Discussants:* Dorothy Bracken, SMU, Dallas.

*In the Remedial Program* (Helen Robinson, Chairman).

What Types of Remedial Programs Are Proving Most Successful?—Arthur Gates.

Using Clinical Services in the Remedial Program—Emmett A. Betts.

*Discussants:* Lillian R. Hinds, Euclid, Ohio.

Sister Mary Nila, Boston.

*Through Research* (George Spache, Chairman).

Research Study: "Listening Comprehension"—Jack Carr, Junior Welfare League Reading Center, University of Chattanooga.

*Discussants:* Arthur Traxler, Educational Records Bureau, New York.

Hollis Leverett, American Optical Co., Southbridge, Mass.

Reading in the Language Arts Program—Ruth Strickland, University of Indiana.

Developing Reading Skills as Part of the Total Language Arts Program—Ruth Strickland, University of Indiana.

Creative Writing and the Teaching of Reading—Casmir Miller, Detroit.

Spelling and the Development of Reading Skills—Margaret Parke, Brooklyn College.

**CREATING BOOKS FOR CHILDREN**

Luncheon, Saturday, May 11, 12:30 p.m.

Chairman, Nancy Larrick, President of I.R.A.

*Speakers:* Lynde Ward, artist

May McNeer, author

Catherine Peare, author

**THE READING PROGRAM IN ACTION:****Demonstration, Discussion and Evaluation**

Saturday p.m. 2:30 to 4:30.

*Individualized Reading: A Program of Seeking, Self-Selection and Pacing* (Alice Miel, Chairman).

The Individualized Reading Program—May Lazar, New York.

The Program in Action—

Percy Bruce, Principal, Roslyn Heights School, Roslyn, N. Y.

*Teen-Agers Speak Frankly About the Reading Program* (Ruth Strang, Chairman).  
(panel of teen-agers).*Storytelling and Creative Dramatics as Aids in the Teaching of Reading* (Dorothy Cadwallader, Chairman).

Phyllis Fenner and Group of Fifth Graders from Manhasset.

*Discussants:* Pauline Scheidt, second grade teacher.

Mary McCrea, reading consultant.



*How to Plan Effective PTA Programs on the Teaching of Reading* (Co-Sponsored by the National Congress of Parents and Teachers).

Chairman: Ruth Gagliardo.

*The Role of the Reading Consultant* (Chairman).

**The Role of the Reading Consultant**

*Presentation:* Anne McKillop, Teachers College, Columbia University.

*Panel Discussion*

*How Can We Give Teachers Better Preparation for the Teaching of Reading?*

Chairman, James M. McCallister

What Are the Needs?—Constance Burns, Fairfield, Conn.

Plans for Better Teacher Preparation—Robert Karlin, New York University.

**Diagnostic Procedures in Remedial Teaching**

*Case Presentation:* Ralph C. Preston, University of Pennsylvania.

*Interrogators:* Ralph Staiger, Mississippi Southern University.

Frederick Westover, University of Alabama.

C. Winfield Scott, New Haven State Teachers College.

Florence Roswell, City College of New York.

**Action Research in the Classroom Concerning Children's Reading.**

Chairman, Alvina Burrows, Chairman, Elementary School Section, National Council of Teachers of English.

*Presentation:* William Bennett, State Teachers College, New Britain, Conn.

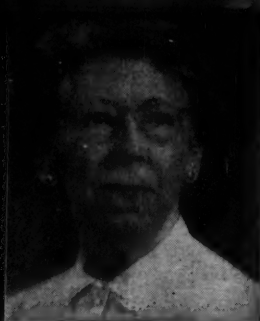
Reports on Action Research: Lucy Polansky, Queens College, Flushing, N. Y.

Books in Action—Annis Duff, author of "Bequest of Wings"

The P.T.A. in Action—Mrs. Aaron Margulis, Chairman of Reading and Libraries, N.C.P.T.

The P.T.A. in Relation to the School—Jordan L. Larson, Superintendent of Schools, Mt. Vernon, N. Y.

*Panel Discussion*



May Hill Arbuthnot

# BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

Edited by MAY HILL ARBUTHNOT

*Mrs. Arbuthnot is well-known as a writer and lecturer in the field of children's literature. She is the author of CHILDREN AND BOOKS (Scott, Foresman, 1947) and three anthologies, combined in the single volume, THE ARBUTHNOT ANTHOLOGY (Scott, Foresman, 1953).*

MARGARET MARY CLARK reviews books of science, social studies, and biography. Miss Clark is head of the Lewis Carroll Room, Cleveland Public Library, and a member of the committee for ADVENTURING WITH BOOKS (National Council of Teachers of English, 1956).

*This spring Mrs. Arbuthnot is taking a well-earned vacation. During this period MISS HARRIET G. LONG, Professor of Library Science at Western Reserve University, has kindly consented to write the reviews of the general children's books. Mrs. Arbuthnot will return to our pages in the fall.*

*The Three Billy Goats Gruff.* By P. C. Asbjornsen and J. E. Moe. Pictures by Marcia Brown. Harcourt, 1957. \$3.00. (4-7).

For too long the folk tales best loved by children have been buried in volumes which are collections of stories. Fortunately, during the past several years six of them have appeared separately in picture-story book format, with illustrations by Marcia Brown: *Dick Whittington and His Cat*, *Stone Soup*, *Puss in Boots*,

*Cinderella*, *The Steadfast Tin Soldier*, *The Flying Carpet*.

This spring children are greeting with pleasure the well-loved *Three Billy Goats Gruff*, with pictures which imaginatively interpret the story. The frolicsome goats, the mountains and fir

trees of Norway, the wicked troll under the bridge, are illustrated with the strength and vigor which are characteristic of Norway and its folk literature.

As Marcia Brown's books have appeared, it has been interesting to observe how thoroughly she absorbs each story and re-creates it in pictures which are closely related to the tale's atmosphere and meaning. The pastel delicacy of style in *Cinderella* is very different from the brilliancy and richness of style in *The Flying Carpet*.

On receiving the Caldecott Medal in 1955 for the distinguished illustrations in *Cinderella*, Marcia Brown had this to say:

When an illustrator attempts the interpretation



Harriet G. Long



Margaret Mary Clark

of a folk or fairy tale that already stands as an entity, the problem of adding a new dimension and bringing the whole into harmonious unity is great. Illustration becomes a kind of visual storytelling in the deepest sense of the word . . . The pictures can convey the wonder, terror, peace, mystery, beauty,—all he is able to feel or might convey if he were telling the story in words.<sup>1</sup> L

*The Rainbow Book of Bible Stories.* By J. Harold Gwynne, D. D. Ill. by Steele Savage. World, 1956. \$4.95. (10-).

A new edition of the Bible is always welcome, and especially so when it is as handsome in format as this one happens to be. The numerous illustrations have strength, dignity, and beauty. Steele Savage is well remembered for the vitality and imaginative power of his drawings for Sally Benson's *Stories of the Gods and Heroes*.

Some editions of the Bible for children adhere closely to the King James translation which is considered the most literary one. In this volume, Dr. Gwynne, who has selected those stories usually found in editions for children, has retold them, probably in order to weave into the retelling the introductions to events and the explanations which he feels is necessary for the child reader to have. In doing so he has retained much of the dignity and majesty of the original, and has not weakened the stories by reducing the language to words of one syllable, and clothing all with a tinge of sentimentality, which all too often happens in retold versions.

This is a large book, with type of a size easy to read, and with over one hundred pictures, some glowing with color, and others printed in blue or green. A treasured volume for any library. L

*And the Waters Prevailed.* By D. Moreau Barringer. Ill. by P. A. Hutchison. Dutton, 1956. \$3.00. (11-up).

Here is a book to stir the mind and imagination. It is based on the probability that what



*And the Waters Prevailed.*

is now the Mediterranean was once a plain between Europe and Africa, with the Atlantic Ocean restlessly eating away at the barrier where Gibraltar now stands. There is uncertainty as to just when this feeble barrier may have given way and the ocean poured in to flood the plain where, according to this story, Andor, a Stone Age boy, lives.

Andor, an undersized boy physically, but with an intelligence that sets him apart from other members of the tribe, foresees that the inundation will come. Like all individuals with unusual ideas he suffers for his belief, and spends his life in frustrating efforts to persuade his people to move out of the valley before it is too late. The waters do prevail, and Andor, now an old man, drowns with many others, but he had shown his grandchildren the route of escape, and it is they who lead others to higher land and a new beginning.

Andor's boyhood; the test by which he proves his manhood by living alone and unarmed in the wilderness until he returns with the skin of a wild animal to clothe him; and his participation in the tribe's struggle for existence give a convincing picture of life at that time.

The author's ability to recreate the past so that it lives again, the compelling theme and dramatic plot make this an unusual book for the good reader. L

<sup>1</sup>Marcia Brown, "Caldecott Award Acceptance," *The Horn Book Magazine*, XXXI (August, 1955), 288, 290.

*The Lone Hunt.* By William O. Steele. Ill. by Paul Galdone. Harcourt, 1956. \$2.75. (10-12).

History has it that the buffalo's final stand in the northern part of the Cumberland Plateau in Tennessee was in 1810. On the slender fact William Steele has written a gripping tale that will please any boy reader. For it was, according to this story, Yancy Caywood, age eleven, who shot the last of the herd.

Because he had no father, and Pleas, his older brother, had to do the farming and hunting, it was Yancy's lot to stay at home and help his mother with the household chores. Rebelling against this role he is finally allowed to go with his brother and other hunters to track down the first buffalo seen in that region for thirty years. Yancy has a strong feeling that this is his buffalo to kill because he had first come upon its tracks. One by one the other hunters turn back in a heavy snow storm. But Yancy and his dog, Blue, slip away, and after many hardships Yancy tracks down the buffalo and shoots it behind the foreleg, just as his Grandpap had taught him.

In the chase Blue is drowned beneath the ice in the river, and Yancy's joy in his own accomplishment is dimmed. But as Pleas tells him, "There ain't any other way to get what you want but to pay for it somehow."

A knowledge of wilderness life and of the people who live close to it, and the ability to create reality with unusual vividness, give to the book a distinction we have come to expect from this author.

L

*Pigeon, Fly home!* By Thomas Liggett. Ill. by Marc Simont. Holiday, 1956. \$2.75. (10-12).

An unusual hobby—pigeon raising and racing—but whether indulged in or not most any boy will find this an absorbing story. Into Chad's flock was born a thin, coffee-colored, scrawny "peeper," which should have been done away with. In spite of the teasing by other members of the local Pigeon Club, Chad deter-



*Pigeon, Fly home!*

mines to raise the bird, and even gives it the name of Leyden, after the Dutch fortress town besieged by the Spanish in the sixteenth century, and saved through messages delivered by homing pigeons.

Chad entered Leyden in the annual race, and the bird's stamina would have led her to victory had she not been killed by a hawk after gamely trying to outfly and out-maneuver her enemy. At the meeting of the Pigeon Club, Chad and his coffee-colored pigeon were given a warm testimonial.

The author has raised homing pigeons, and shares his knowledge of their racing habits, as well as his enthusiasm for their intelligence and endurance.

The book has unusually attractive format and illustrations.

L

*Miracles on Maple Hill.* By Virginia Sorensen. Ill. by Beth and Joe Krush. Harcourt, 1956. \$2.95. (9-11). Newbery Medal winner for 1956.

A most appropriate book to read in the spring of the year, for it was in March that Marley, her brother Jo, and their parents made the first trip from Pittsburgh to a home in the country. The house and barn that nestled against the hill had belonged to Marley's grandmother, and was now theirs. It is true that it had not been lived in for many years and was a bit run-down. Field mice had taken over the inside, and had to be got rid of summarily much to Marley's distress.

All during the spring they came from the city for the week end, and on each visit Marley saw the miracle of nature's awakening. Chris, a neighboring farmer, became her special friend. He could imitate the song of the birds as they returned from the south, and he knew where the first wild flowers grew. Best of all he let the whole family help to gather the pails of sap and boil it down to maple syrup.

But the greatest miracle of all was the improvement in her father's health in the out-of-door life. Years in a prison camp after the war had made him often cross, nervous, and discouraged. At summer's end the family decides to live there permanently, and the story follows their experiences through the year until it is maple syrup time again.

This is Virginia Sorensen's best book for children. It is permeated with a loving awareness of the changing seasons, the warm friendliness of country neighbors, two very real and likable children, and good family life. L



*The Secret.*

*The Secret.* By Dorothy Clewes. Ill. by Sofia Coward, 1956. \$2.50. (8-10).

For two apartment-dwelling city children there was no place to play. The grass in front was not to be walked on; the paved area by the garages was all right, but only when no one wanted in or out. It was Kay who discovered a path beneath the tree back of the garages, and followed it to an iron gate which

looked padlocked but wasn't. She pushed the gate open far enough to slip through and came upon a real garden with a pool and fountain and summer house, all in a state of neglect. This meant that no one ever came there and she and her friend Rory could have it as a secret place.

Rory, who had always wanted a dog, or guinea pig, or some pet or other but was forbidden because there was no place to keep it, is given a rabbit by the well-to-do Gerald, who lived in a house with a yard two streets over, a boastful but lonely boy. As it turns out it is Gerald's father who really owns the secret garden, and he has plans to make use of it, but Gerald comes to the rescue, and in the process finds two friends in Rory and Kay.

A pleasantly told, easy-to-read story which reflects the desire of all children for a secret place of their own, away from adult interference. L

*The Useful Dragon of Sam Ling Toy.* Written and illustrated by Glen Dines. Macmillan, 1956. \$2.25. (4-6).

A gay tale of San Francisco's Chinatown, and of Sam Ling Toy whose laundry shop is crowded with puppies, kittens, pigeons, frogs and turtles, indeed almost any kind of creature that needed rescuing. One day Sam Ling Toy found what he thought was a lost lizard, but it grew and grew until it became a huge dragon.

The dragon loved to chase the cable cars and to dance in the street, but more than anything



*The Useful Dragon of Sam Ling Toy.*



he wanted to be useful. His efforts in this direction were not welcomed, especially when he tried to direct traffic, and the policeman had to unscramble the cars and trucks. When New Year's Day came he found his mission in leading the parade, rattling his scales and wriggling his tale to the delight of young and old.

The illustrations in brilliant red, blue and yellow are full of action and laughter. A picture-story book which is refreshingly original. L

*The Scary Thing.* Written and illustrated by Laura Bannon. Houghton, 1956. \$2.00. (3-7).

A simple story, with something of a folk tale flavor, for the beginning reader by the author-artist of the very successful *Red Mittens*. In this one, Little Jo, the hero of the earlier book, was picking dandelions one spring day when a hen came running to tell him of a



*The Scary Thing.*

scary thing in the high bushes near the old stump. Little Jo, the hen, and the cat go to investigate but are frightened away. It is the

cow who calmly shows them that the scary thing was nothing but her baby calf, so new she could barely stand alone. She grew so fast that a few days later she ran and jumped over the meadow with Little Jo. L

*The Wonderful World of Archaeology.* By Ronald Jessup. Illustrated by Norman Battershill and Kenneth Symonds. Diagrams by Isotype Institute. Garden City, 1956. \$2.95. (10 and up).

Even in pre-Christian times there were antiquarians who sought to discover the secrets of the past. In our own time, modern science has made tremendous contributions to the science of archaeology. This account of men's great achievements in reconstructing the lives and cultures of ancient, even prehistoric peoples is absorbingly told and illustrated in rich color, with several pictures to a page. Similar in format to Lancelot Hogben's *The Wonderful World of Mathematics*, this attractive book also suggests a useful supplement to ancient history as well as a fine introduction to archaeology. C

*The Story of Alaska.* By Harold McCracken. Illustrated by Earl Oliver Hurst. Garden City, 1956. \$2.50. (10-14).

"Alaska was discovered by civilized explorers only a little more than two hundred years ago" and in that brief time both Russians and Americans discovered its immensely rich natural resources. The harsh dramatic periods of exploration and exploitation followed by the establishment of law and order are vividly described by the author who has lived in Alaska. He has made an excellent choice of details in describing the history of the country. The book is generously illustrated with three-color drawings. C

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